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TRAVELS IN ARABIA;

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LIEUT. J. R. WELLSTED, F.R.S.

INDIAN NAVY.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

—

VOL. I.

OMAN AND NAKAB EL HÁJAR.

LONDON:

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE-STREET.

MDCCCXXXVIII.

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TO

HER MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY

THE QUEEN,

THESE

"*TRAVELS IN ARABIA*"

ARE,

WITH HER GRACIOUS PERMISSION,

VERY HUMBLY AND RESPECTFULLY

DEDICATED

BY

HER MAJESTY'S

FAITHFUL SUBJECT AND SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

Dec. 1837.

INTRODUCTION.

With the exception of that portion relating to the peninsula of Sinaï, the following volumes contain the Author's researches in parts of Arabia hitherto imperfectly or wholly unknown to Europeans. They may, therefore, derive a value from these considerations to which it is very certain they would otherwise have no claim.

In the personal narrative he has endeavoured to convey to the reader the impressions produced on his mind at the moment of each particular occurrence. As to the rest, it was compiled from copious notes collected at various intervals. Many of the facts herein stated have never previously been made known to an European public, and it is on this ground of novelty alone that the Author diffidently hopes his researches may prove interesting to the philosopher and the naturalist, as well as to those more immediately engaged in geographical pursuits.

The vindication of Bruce's reputation, being

founded on self-evident facts, can scarcely be impugned. Such readers, however, as feel interested in the question,—and in this number the Author flatters himself the great majority are included,—will be gratified to know that one—by no means the least virulent of his detractors—did an act of tardy justice to the reputation he once actively laboured to destroy*.

It remains but to acknowledge the assistance derived from others towards the completion of this work. The Author's thanks are especially due to JOHN ARROWSMITH, Esq., to whose knowledge, skill, and industry, so many travellers have already recorded their deep obligations, for constructing and engraving the

* The following communication from Captain W. H. Smyth, R.N., V.P.R.S., to the Author, is here alluded to:—"It may strengthen your conviction of the substantial claims of Bruce to the applause of his country, when I tell you that Mr. Salt admitted to me that he (Salt) had drawn his conclusions too hastily, and from preconceived impressions. The late Dr. Gillies, the historian of Greece, who criticized Bruce so severely in the *Monthly Review*, also assured me that he afterwards altered his opinions entirely in favour of him. Indeed, those who have made journeys in the present day can readily estimate what must have been his courage, address, and perseverance, to have accomplished so much at that time;—and when I first visited Algiers and Bengazi, he was not entirely forgotten.

"It is curious that Dr. Gillies married the sister of the enterprising Captain Beaver, who, in his 'African Memoranda,' renders due tribute to the merits of Bruce, and emphatically styles him 'the Prince of Travellers.'"

maps with which it is illustrated; to the Rev. J. Reynolds, Secretary to the Oriental Committee, for the translation of a valuable manuscript relative to the religion of Omán; to Lieut. H. A. Ormsby, I.N., whose intimate acquaintance with Bedowin habits and customs has aided him considerably in his account of that interesting people; to Captain R. Moresby, the author of the admirable Charts of the Red Sea and Coast of Arabia, which have excited the admiration of many learned societies in Europe; and to his esteemed and respected friend Admiral Sir Charles Malcolm, to whose personal regard, as well as to his enthusiastic zeal for the extension of geographical science, the Author was indebted for facilities which mainly contributed to the satisfactory issue of his long and arduous undertaking.

In the map of Omán, the routes of Lieut. Whitelock are added to his own; he accompanied the Author over the greater part of the province: and, after he left, succeeded in passing from Schinas to Shárja. For the drawing of the Bisharyan Camel, which embellishes this volume, the Author is indebted to J. Bonomi, Esq.,

who was kind enough to allow it to be taken from a model in his possession.

For the more complete illustration of the text, he has availed himself of several notes by the Rev. G. C. RENOUARD, which were attached to papers inserted in the Journal of the Royal Geographical Society. The mode of spelling Arabic proper names, adopted throughout, is also that advocated by the same gentleman* who has reduced Oriental orthography to a fixed standard, as far as those papers are concerned. Each letter has invariably its corresponding equivalent. The consonants are sounded as in English; the vowels as in Italian; the accents mark long vowels, and an apostrophe ['] the letter 'ain. *Gh* and *hh* are strong gutturals; the former often resembling the Northumbrian *r*, the latter the Welsh and Gaelic *ch*. *A*, *e*, *i*, *o*, are to be respectively pronounced as in far, there, ravine, and cold; *u* as in rude, or *oo* in fool; *eï* as *ey* in they; *ou* as *ow* in fowl; *ai* as *i* in thin; *ch* as in child.

* Vol. vi. p. 51.

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TRAVELS

IN

THE PROVINCE OF OMÁN.

CHAPTER I.

Aspect of Arabia—Its unexplored Districts—The Author's preparations for his Journey—Arrives at Maskat—Interview with the Imám—His presents—Personal appearance and generosity of character—Maskat; its ancient name and commercial importance—Position—Fortifications, Houses, &c.

ARABIA has been aptly compared to a coat of frieze bordered with gold, since the only cultivated or fertile spots are found on its confines, the intermediate space being filled with arid and sandy wastes.

Nearly the whole of its Syrian or northern frontier has been examined. Burckhardt describes, from personal observation, the immediate vicinity of Mecca and Medina in the Hedjaz; and Niebuhr, in the same manner, a small portion of Yemen; but the extensive

provinces of Hadramaut and Omán; together with the western side bordering on the Persian Gulf, were still wholly unexplored.

During my employment for some years past on the survey of the southern and western coasts of Arabia, my attention was constantly directed towards attaining a knowledge of the provinces contiguous to them; but no opportunity for penetrating the country, which presented a fair chance of success, occurred within this period, until the commencement of the year 1835, when the restless and grasping disposition of Mohammed Ali induced him to despatch a force from Egypt, in order to take possession of the Coffee country. My proposal of accompanying his army to this point, and from thence to endeavour to reach Hadramaut, was immediately acceded to by the Indian government; but, before their sanction could be conveyed to me, intelligence arrived of the Pacha's force having been led into a defile in the Assaïr country, and there defeated with great slaughter; a miserable remnant alone reaching the sea-shore.

Foiled, therefore, in this quarter, on my return to Bombay I turned my attention towards

Omán, which possesses claims not inferior in interest to the other provinces, but deterred, in all probability, by the known insalubrity of its climate, and the supposed hostile character of its inhabitants, no European traveller has hitherto penetrated it, and its people, with their country, remained wholly unknown to us. In the prosecution of this project, I was induced to hope that the political relations between its liberal and enlightened ruler and our own government were of such a nature as to leave little doubt but that he would afford every facility in his power to the object of the mission. After obtaining the necessary permission for this purpose, I passed a few days in procuring the requisite letters* and presents, and on November 9th, 1835, embarked on board a small schooner (the Cyrene), for

* The following is a copy of one of these Official Documents:—

Persian Department, No. 17, *of* 1835.

These are to certify, that Lieutenant Wellsted is proceeding, with the sanction of the Right Honourable the Governor in Council of Bombay, through various parts of Arabia, and all those who are desirous of maintaining the friendship of the British Government are requested to show him every attention and civility.

By order of the Right Honourable the Governor in Council,

W. H. WATHEN, Sec. to Government.

Bombay Castle, 7th November, 1835.

Maskat*, at which port, after a pleasant passage, we arrived on the 21st of the same month.

Shortly after our little bark had anchored within the cove, I went on shore and waited on the Imám; but finding that he had a full divan, I took the liberty of requesting a private audience on the morrow, which was immediately granted.

November 22nd. I found no one with his Highness this morning but his son, and after delivering my presents, a few words sufficed to explain the objects of my proposed journey. Prepared as I was by my previous knowledge of Sayyid S'aid's characteristic liberality to meet with no unfavourable exception to these, I was surprised out of all former conception by the eagerness he displayed to further my views. "It is occasions like these," he said, "which afford me real pleasure, since they enable me, by meeting the wishes of your government, to evince the strength of my attachment to them;" and he added, in a tone the sincerity of which there was no mistaking,

* Sometimes spelt "Muscat" by English writers, but more properly as above.

"these are not words of the tongue, but of the heart." After a conversation of some length, in which I received every aid from his perfect knowledge of the country, it was arranged that as there was but one road to the southward, which I felt no desire to repass, that I should proceed first to Súr, land there, and go on to Benî-Abú-'Alî, thence cross in a line nearly parallel with the sea-shore, to the Jebel Akhdar, or Green Mountains, which are described as elevated, populous, and fruitful; and after investigating them, finish the remaining portion of Omán; and from thence, if the road should continue open, proceed to Der'ayyah*, the Wahhábí capital. Some other minor subjects were then discussed and arranged, and I took my leave, highly gratified with the prospect of success before me.

November 23rd. From his Highness this morning I received a fine Nejd horse for my journey, a brace of greyhounds, and a gold-mounted sword, together with an intimation,

* Situated in the Wádí Benî Hanífah: it is one of the defiles by which alone the Nejd el Arid can be entered. *Tchán Numá*, p. 523.

that so long as I remained in Omán, the best the country afforded should be mine; that all expenses of camels, guides, &c., would be defrayed by him, and that letters were preparing, under his own direction, to the chiefs of the different districts through which I had to pass, requiring them to receive me with all possible attention. Placing on one side every consideration which might have actuated this prince in furthering what he supposed the views of my government to serve me, there was, on this occasion, in the style and mode in which he exhibited it, a spirit in full accordance with the truly noble character which he bears.

Sayyid S'aid is fifty-two years of age, and has reigned twenty-seven years. He possesses a tall and commanding figure; a mild, yet striking countenance; and an address and manner courtly, affable, and dignified. In his personal habits, the Imám has preserved the simplicity of his Bedowin origin; he is frugal almost to abstemiousness; he never wears jewels; his dress, excepting in the fineness of the materials, is not superior to that of the principal inhabitants; and he is attended,

on all occasions, without pomp or ostentation. It is noticed by the Arabs, as an instance of the warmth of his affections, that he daily visits his mother, who is still alive, and pays, in all matters, implicit obedience to her wishes. In his intercourse with Europeans, he has ever displayed the warmest attention and kindness; probably, if any native prince can with truth be called a friend to the English, it is the Imám of Maskat; and even on our side, the political connexion with him appears to have in it more sincerity than is generally supposed to exist.

The government of this prince is principally marked by the absence of all oppressive imposts, all arbitrary punishments, by his affording marked attention to the merchants of any nation who come to reside at Maskat, and by the general toleration which is extended to all persuasions: while, on the other hand, his probity, the impartiality and leniency of his punishments, together with the strict regard he pays to the general welfare of his subjects, have rendered him as much respected and admired by the town Arabs, as his liberality and personal courage

have endeared him to the Bedowins. These splendid qualities have obtained for him throughout the East the designation of the Second Omar.

Sayyid S'aid is the son of Sooltan, the third son of Ahmed Ibn S'aid, who, in A.D. 1730, rescued his country from the Persian yoke. Although the individuals in this line are not of the Yaharabi* ul Azad tribe, by whom the sovereignty of Omán was held for about two hundred and fifty years, and to whom, in the person of Saaef, Ahmed Ibn S'aid, of the Yaharabi ul Azedu, succeeded, yet the two dynasties are collaterally descended from the same common ancestor, Azad, which is

* Jarab was the son of Sooltan, the son of Eber, and brother of Peleg, and from him the ancient Arabians derive their ancestry. The Yaharabi, therefore, who claim the nearest approach to the parent stem, trace their genealogy further back than the other tribes in Arabia, and may, undoubtedly, be pronounced the oldest family in the world. Saba, the grandson of Sooltan, founded Saba, and the Sabeans are supposed to be identified with the Cushites, who dwelt upon the shores of the Persian Gulf. This was the position the Seceders occupied at the period of the dispute between Ali and Mowaiyah for the caliphat, and it throws a ray of light upon the mist that envelopes the history of this remote period, when we find some direct evidence bearing on a point which has heretofore been a matter of mere conjecture. The name of Arabia, with some show of reason, has also been derived from the Jarib here alluded to.

also the general appellation of the tribe in which both branches are included. The present sovereign of Omán, however, is not styled Imám by the Arabs. In order to attain this title it is necessary, at the period of his election, that he should possess sufficient theological attainments to preach before the assembled chiefs, by whom he is chosen, and their followers; and also that he should not embark on board ships. The latter, as in the case of Saaf, who took possession of the ports on the African coast and their dependencies, is, after installation, overlooked; but the former they consider so indispensably binding that Sayyid S'aid, who either does not possess the necessary attainments, or fancies so, has dispensed with the ceremony altogether, and, in consequence, receives from his subjects the title of Sayyid, or prince, only.

Reserving for a future section the details connected with the government, which apply generally to the greater portion of the towns in Omán, I shall first give an account of Maskat, and then proceed at once to the narrative of my travels. Various notices of

this town may be found in the pages of Niebuhr, Hamilton, and others, but they mostly refer to a remote period, and are now, from the great change which its condition and commerce have experienced under its present ruler, scarcely applicable to it. I shall, therefore, give the result of my own observation and inquiries at some length.

It would appear that the ancient geographers * were acquainted at an early period with the position of Maskat †. It was probably Moscha, a port of the Hadramitæ, mentioned by Ptolemy: noticed also by Arrian, in the Periplus of the Erythrean Sea, as the grand emporium of the trade between India, Persia, and Arabia. But, notwithstanding this testimony, Maskat does not appear to have been a place of very considerable commercial importance until the Portuguese took possession of the town in 1508, and converted it into an intermediate port, where their ships might obtain supplies and refreshments in the passage between their Indian settlements and that on the Island of Ormuz in the Persian Gulf.

* Geographa, lib. vii. cap. 6, p. 153. † Edrissi writes it مسقط.

With this view they fortified it with considerable labour and expense. When the latter city, on the 26th April, 1622, was taken possession of by the Persians, under the Emperor Shah Abbas, a great number of its wealthiest inhabitants sought shelter in Maskat; but, in 1658, the Arabs, having retaken the city from the Portuguese, put all the garrison to the sword, and the only vestiges of their settlement now remaining are the forts and two churches, one of which has fallen to ruins, and the other is converted into a palace for the Imám. From this period, until Sayyid S'aid obtained the government, the reigning princes only visited Maskat occasionally, and Rosták was considered the capital of Omán.

The town of Maskat is situated at the extremity of a small cove in the gorges of an extensive pass, which widens from this point as it advances into the interior. On either side, the cove hills, to the height of from three to five hundred feet, rise almost perpendicularly from the sea, and appear lined with forts, which, considering they belong to the vicinity of an Arab town, are in a toler-

able state of repair. The largest, and most commanding, are erected, on either side, at the inner extremity of the cove; and within that on the western side state prisoners are confined. Two half-moon batteries also command the entrance: the guns appear well mounted, and the guard at all seasons on the alert. The distance across, from fort to fort, is only half a mile, so that an open attack in the day-time would be very difficult, if these were well served.

To persons arriving from seaward, Maskat with its fort and contiguous hills, have an extraordinary and romantic appearance. Not a tree, shrub, or other trace of vegetation is visible, and the whitened surface of the houses, and turreted forts in the vicinity, contrast in a singular manner with the burnt and cindery aspect of the darkened masses of rock around. Similar in its aspect to most eastern cities when viewed from a distance, we first discern the level roofs of the dwellings, the domes of the mosques, their lofty minarets, and other prominent features, and the view retains these attractive features until we land, when the illusion quickly disappears. Narrow crowded

streets and filthy bazaars, nearly blocked up by porters bearing burthens of dates, grain, &c., wretched huts intermingled with low and paltry houses, the owners of which, seated on a small projecting part before their door, are merely sheltered from the heat of the sun by tattered canvas awnings; and other dwellings more than half fallen to decay, but which yet continue tenanted, meet the eye in every direction. There are, nevertheless, within the town several substantial, handsome houses; the palace of the Imám, and those belonging to the old princess, his mother, the governors, and several others, being of the latter description. The form of these edifices differs considerably from what is usually seen in the towns of Yemen and the Hedjaz, and partakes more of the Persian style of architecture.

Maskat is built on a slope, rising with a gradual ascent from the sea, where the water nearly washes the bases of the houses. This side has no defence, but the others are protected by a wall fourteen feet high, with a dry ditch. The entrance is by two gates, which they close every night at sunset.

CHAPTER II.

Abundance of Provisions—Natives—Belúches—Persians—Manufactory of Arms—Intermarriages—Insalubrity of Maskat—Banians—Oriental Bankrupts—Banian Cows—Jews—Population—Customs—Exports and Imports—Pilgrims—Coffee trade—Dates—Distillation of Arrack.

NOTWITHSTANDING its unpromising appearance, there are few parts where supplies may be obtained in greater profusion, or of better quality. Beef, mutton, poultry, fruit throughout the year, fish, &c., are all good in their several kinds. Maskat is supplied with water by means of a deep well, contiguous to which there is a fort, where a guard in time of war is constantly stationed, in order to prevent others from cutting off the supply. A newly constructed aqueduct conveys the water to the town. It is hard, and of an indifferent quality. The cove abounds with fish.

The greater portion of the inhabitants of Maskat are of a mixed race, the descendants

of Arabs, Persians, Indians, Syrians, by the way of Baghdad and Basarah, Kurds, Afghans, Belúches, &c., who, attracted by the mildness of the government, have settled here, either for the purposes of commerce, or to avoid the despotism of the surrounding governments. This we discover has been the case from a very early period; two centuries before the birth of Mohammed, a powerful tribe, then residing on the shores of the Persian Gulf, sought refuge here against the oppression of the Persians, and, as late as 1828, a party of Jews, unable any longer to endure the exactions and tyranny of Daud Pacha, were received by the Imám with much kindness.

Few Afghans make Maskat their permanent residence, those seen in the town being mostly pilgrims to or from Mecca. Hence they seldom enter into many commercial speculations, and are further remarkable for keeping aloof from the other classes. The Belúches, on the contrary, mix with all, and though a thrifty race, are in general very poor. A considerable number of the Imám's household troops are recruited from this class;

others hire themselves as porters, an occupation for which their athletic forms well befit them, while some few engage as mariners on board bagalás * or ships, where they are much esteemed for their cheerfulness and activity. In consequence of the difference in their faith, the Omán Arabs and Persians seldom intermarry, but with the Belúches the Arabs are less fastidious, since they not unfrequently obtain Arab wives, and reside here permanently, which they also frequently do, in the event of any of their slaves becoming mothers. It is only very recently that the former treachery of the Persians has been overlooked by the Arabs. During Imám Saaf's reign, a garrison of the latter were admitted into the town; but taking advantage of that prince's habitual vice of drunkenness, they on one occasion seized upon the forts, deposed him, and usurped the government. After they in their turn were dispossessed, they were not allowed in any considerable number to reside within the town; but since the marriage

* A rude description of vessel of various burthens, from fifty to three hundred tons. The term is, most probably, from bagala or bagla, a kind of heron. (*Ardea Torra.*)

of the Imám with the Princess of Shiraz, that order, with several other restrictions, has been rescinded. Indeed, an offence committed by a Persian, whether it be of a civil or criminal nature, is permitted to go before their own Cazi, and, according to his report, they are punished or acquitted. The Persians at Maskat are mostly merchants, who deal in India piece-goods, coffee, hookahs or raleans, and rose-water. Others, from Bunder, Abbas, Lar, and Menon, manufacture swords and matchlocks, for which there is a great demand in the interior.

From their mixed descent, and also from the custom of intermarrying with their Zansibar and Abyssinian slaves, the complexion of this portion of the inhabitants varies very considerably; but the higher orders, who have preserved untainted the purity of their Arabian descent, retain, in a remarkable degree, the peculiar characteristics of their race. In their persons they are mostly spare, and their skins are of a light, healthy brown colour. They rarely suffer from fevers, although the climate of Maskat is, in this respect especially, fatal to

strangers, no European having been able to live there hitherto, and many fatal cases occur in such of our ships as are compelled to remain but for a few days. The lower classes are stout, with remarkably muscular limbs, and some of them afford the most perfect models of strength and symmetry. So little variation is to be found in the habits, disposition, and moral character of the Arabs who occupy the maritime towns, that I have preferred treating of them generally in a separate section. It remains to notice two other classes of foreigners in Maskat.

There are more Banians here than in any other city of Arabia. At the period of my visit it was calculated that they amounted to one thousand five hundred, and, under the mild administration of Sayyid S'aid, they were supposed to be rapidly increasing. They possess a small temple, are permitted to keep and protect a certain number of cows, to burn the dead, and to follow, in all other respects, the uninterrupted enjoyment of their respective religious tenets, without any of that arbitrary distinction of dress which they are compelled to adopt in the

cities of Yemen. Here they appear to possess all the privileges of Mussulman subjects, with one single exception. The relation of a Banian slain by a Mussulman can be compelled to accept a compensation for blood, while with the Arab it is a matter of choice.

They mostly embark at Porebunder from the north-west provinces of India, and, in the prosecution of their commercial avocations, frequently remain for a period of fifteen or twenty years. They never bring their women with them, and, though it is well known that they occasionally intrigue with Arab females, there are few exceptions to their remaining unmarried for the whole of this period. It is, however, a singular fact in connexion with the history of this class, that, when occasional, though rare instances occur of their falling away from their own faith, and adopting that of the Mussulmans, the latter do not appear to pride themselves on their proselytes. A practice they have of proclaiming themselves bankrupt, is a subject of considerable diversion to the Arabs. An individual thus situated seats himself in the open day in his shop with a candle

burning before him. Those of his own class to whom he is indebted no sooner perceive this, than they come in and revile him in no measured terms, and sometimes even beat him. But, after this ebullition, he is not molested until he has again commenced business, and is in a fair way to retrieve himself, when they again commence their importunities, so that his failure in no wise releases him from his former obligations.

Accompanied by an Arab merchant and some Bedowins, I once went to look at the cows belonging to this sect. There were about two hundred in a large space, enclosed by a wall. The animals were well fed, sleek, and mischievous. Myself and the merchant, being unarmed, were permitted to enter, but this was denied to the Bedowins, because they wore their jambeers, and it was thought would not fail to use them in case the animals became at all mischievous. My companions immediately perched themselves, with several others who had collected, on the wall, and seemed to derive excessive amusement from observing the form of adoration which the Banians were paying to their

cattle. When the animals fall sick, the Banian pays them the utmost attention, and, should they exhibit no symptoms of recovery, they are, as in the towns on many other parts of the coast, sent off to India. The habits of this class are, however, too well known to need any further mention here.

In Maskat the Banians constitute a body of the principal merchants, who almost exclusively monopolise the pearl trade from the Persian Gulf, amounting, it is calculated, to fifteen lacs of dollars annually. They enter as largely into the supply of grain from India, and have also most extensive dealings in Indian cloths and piece-goods.

There are a few Jews in Maskat, who mostly arrived there in 1828, being driven from Baghdad, as we have before stated, by the cruelties and extortions of the Pacha Daud. Nearly the whole of this race were compelled to fly. Some took refuge in Persia, while others, in their passage towards India, remained here. The same toleration exercised towards all other persuasions is extended to the Beni Israel, no badge or mark, as in Egypt or Syria, being insisted on: they

are not, as in the town of Yemen, compelled to occupy a distant and separate part of the town, nor is the observance, so strictly adhered to in Persia, of compelling them to pass to the left of Mussulmans when meeting in the streets, here insisted on. Their avocations in Maskat are various, many being employed in the fabrication of silver ornaments, others in shroffing money, and some few retail intoxicating liquors.

I should fix the population of Maskat and Muttrah at sixty thousand souls.

This town is entitled to a high rank among Oriental cities, not only as the emporium of a very considerable trade between Arabia, India, and Persia, but also, in reference to its extensive imports, of some note as the seaport of Omán.

The customs, fixed at five per cent. on all imported goods, are farmed at Maskat for one hundred and five thousand, and at Muttrah for sixty thousand dollars, which give, collectively, an annual importation of three millions three hundred thousand dollars, or about nine hundred thousand pounds sterling. No duties of any kind are levied

on exports. Although this does not sound very imposing when contrasted with the ports of India or Europe, it is very considerable for Arabia, the imports being chiefly cloth and corn; and, indeed, the amount exceeds that of any other town in the country, Jiddah excepted.

The principal articles which are brought to, and afterwards exported from Maskat, and on which no duty is levied, are coffee and pearls. In the conveyance of the former eight or ten large, and double that number of smaller vessels, trade between Yemen and Mas'kat: they make but one voyage during the year. Some of these vessels are of two hundred and fifty tons, and upwards.

Freighted with dates, Persian tobacco, carpets, and generally filled with Persian pilgrims, they proceed along the Arabian coast, and up the Red Sea, to Jiddah, where they land their pilgrims; and such of the crew who are desirous of doing so, proceed with them to the Hadj at Mecca. There they probably remain one or two months, according as the period may serve for the return of the pilgrims; but, after leaving that port, they

make the best of their way to either Mocha or Hedeidha, when they exchange the bullion received as passage money from the pilgrims for coffee, and manage to quit the Red Sea at the beginning or middle of the month of May, so as to avoid the first burst of the south-west monsoon. The coffee brought hither is then disposed of, and that which is not required for the consumption of the people in the town, or for sale to the Bedowins of the neighbouring provinces, is shipped off in smaller boats to Bahrain, Basarah, and the southern parts of the Persian Gulf. Formerly the trade to Basarah was very extensive, Syria being almost exclusively supplied through this channel, but the importation of West Indian coffee into the Levant has now almost exclusively supplanted that from Mocha.

At Maskat the coffee trade is in the hands of the Banians, and is said to be very lucrative. The pearl fisheries in the Persian Gulf are estimated at forty lacs annually, and nearly two-thirds of that produce are brought hither in small boats, and from thence conveyed to Bombay in ships or bagalás.

They mostly arrive sealed at Maskat, and very few are disposed of there. In Bombay the Parsees are the principal purchasers, and a great many are sent by them to China.

Maskat yields but few exports, and no duty is now levied on them. The principal are dates, taken to India, where large quantities are required to make the government arrack, or are sold at the different ports on the southern coast of Arabia; ruinos, or red dye, much valued in India; sharks' fins, shipped off to China, where they are used for making soup, and a variety of other purposes; and salt fish, much esteemed by the lower classes of natives in India. The returns for these articles are made principally in bullion and coffee. A number of mules from Persia, and asses from the Island of Bahrain, are annually sent to the Isle of France.

CHAPTER III.

Excursion to the Hot Springs of Imám Ali—Cove of Maskat—Heat—Glassy surface of the Sea—The Laughing Gull—Visit on board a Bagalá—Singular appearance of her Crew—Songs—Music—Dancing—Remarkable Echo—Scenery—Matarah—Population—Arab Women—Bedowins—A Village—Watch Dogs—Caravanserai—Description of the Springs—Irrigation—Height of the Thermometer—Fine Climate—Return to Maskat.

November 23rd. Having obtained from his Highness this morning an officer to accompany me, I set out on a visit to the hot springs of Imám Ali, which are situated on the sea-shore, about seven hours to the westward of the town. Although the cool season was so far advanced the day proved excessively sultry, and when we pushed off in our boat for Matarah, notwithstanding a fresh breeze was prevailing outside, yet within the cove it was a perfect calm, and the heat thrown off from the sides of the mountains,

along the base of which we were gliding, felt almost overpowering. At this time the sea presented a surface so smooth and glassy, that it reflected the dark hills, the whitened forts, the houses, and the shipping, with as much distinctness as from a mirror; and it required the slight motion communicated to their shadows by the long, undulating swell, which rolled slowly and lazily into the cove, to enable the beholder to determine the pictured objects from those which were real. Under the fierce glare of the noontide heat, the town, with its usually busy inhabitants, was silent, and at rest. Occasionally a long, slight canoe might be perceived, dotting the surface, as it rose on the summit of one of the rolling waves, with a single fisherman seated near its stern pursuing his solitary occupation, while, hovering around him, and stooping occasionally to share in his "scaly spoil," the laughing sea-gull utters that wild, shrill, and piercing cry, distinguishable even at a distance, and which has given rise to its appropriate, but singular appellation.

On sweeping round an angle of the rock, we perceived a large bagalá lying becalmed,

and I will here introduce the scene which presented itself when I stepped on board, under an impression I should receive some letters. Let the reader picture to himself a huge misshapen vessel, of at least four hundred tons, with a long projecting prow, and an elevated and elaborately carved and ornamented stern, having but a single mast and single sail, the latter spread on a yard one hundred and fifty feet in length, and containing more canvass than the courses of the largest first-rates in his Majesty's navy. The decks appear crowded with beings of every hue, and from every clime. The Persian, distinguished by his flowing and richly-coloured dress; the Arab, with his coarse cloak of broad alternate stripes; the Beluche, with his long hair and white garments; and the Armenian, who affects a costume bearing some resemblance to the unsightly garb of the Franks, are mixed up with, and jostled by African negroes, who have but a piece of tattered cloth thrown around their waist. The latter compose the greater part of the crew, which may amount in number to one hundred and fifty men. For their encou-

ragement and recreation, whenever work is going on, about ten of their number are selected to sing to the remainder. A boy, with a sharp tenor voice, usually leads the concert, and to him his comrades reply in a deep, bass cadence, accompanying their voices with several rude instruments of music, and joining in a wild and picturesque sort of dance. These instruments are rude; one resembles the tom-tom of Hindustan; another, still more simple, the tambourine of Europe; but, when unprovided with these, I have observed them beating time upon one of their copper cooking dishes. To the European, scarcely any combination of sounds can appear farther removed from music, or, indeed, more thorougly discordant, yet on these Africans their effects appear indescribably exciting. The expression of the face, the contortions of the limbs and body, the yells with which their dancing gestures are accompanied, and the length of time they will continue the exercise, in fact until they sink down in a state of exhaustion, denote an intense sympathy with sounds to which we are equally strangers.

A light breeze sprang up, and, as they passed the forts on either side the entrance, two guns were fired, and the effects, contrasted with the former silence, were extremely magnificent. The reverberations, confined at first to the inner or nearer circle of hills, exceeded, rather than fell short of, the loudness of the original discharge; and might, as they broke in quick succession on the ear, be compared to the simultaneous and rapid firing of several heavy batteries of artillery. Nor was this diminished when they mingled with the secondary echoes, returned from more distant mountains, until, at length, the sounds became gradually more faint, and terminated in the former absolute silence. The rising breeze had wafted the smoke above the hills, and a strong beam of light was thrown on the shipping in the harbour, so that their masts, rigging, and even the lazy pendant, became, as it were, pencilled out upon the dark hills which formed the cove; but, owing to the peculiar nature of the scenery, the insignificance of works of art contrasted with those of nature, never appeared to me so striking

as at this spot. The huge hulk of a seventy-four, and several scarcely less heavy frigates, with their spreading yards and lofty spars, are perfectly lost beneath the first range of what would otherwise appear low and insignificant hillocks.

After rounding the cape which forms the north-western extremity of the cove, we enter the neighbouring bay of Matarah, and pass a pretty town, situated on one of those low nooks which form a distinguishing feature in the scenery of this part of the world. Between the houses and the margin of the sea, so as to form a neat-looking promenade and landing-place, there is a broad belt of light-coloured sand, which extends to the bold, gloomy cliffs overhanging either extremity of the town. The cove faces the prevailing breezes, and, in consequence of its exposed situation, is, at present, rarely frequented by vessels of any description; not a fishing-boat, nor even a canoe, was visible, and their absence added to the solitary, yet not unpleasing effect of the whole.

Nearly in a direction with Matarah, a rugged islet rose before us. Its sides were

splintered and shattered into curiously-shaped peaks, and on the very summit of these, where to the eye it appears difficult to conceive that the foot of man could have found a resting-place, watch-towers have been erected. From one of the most elevated, a picturesque group of Arab soldiery, whose matchlocks and long lances glittered in the sunbeams, were gazing on us as we passed beneath them.

Matarah is a considerable town, or rather a very large collection of huts, situated at the extremity of a cove, much frequented by the Imám's vessels, but seldom by those of others. Notwithstanding it is but a mile from the town, the road, leading over a range of hills is so rugged, that the communication between the two towns is maintained principally by boats. It sinhabitants are computed at twenty thousand, and their principal employment is weaving cloth, or fabricating the woollen cloaks so generally worn in Arabia. Scarcely a hut but contained its spinning-wheel, with a female busily employed before it. All had their faces uncovered: their features were regular, and, in many cases, hand-

some, but the effect is, in a measure, destroyed by the absurd practice of dying the skin with henna. Their freedom of demeanour, when contrasted with that usually observed in Arab towns, gives no very flattering picture of their morals.

Camels had been provided for us, and, after a ride of two hours over a country wholly uninteresting, we arrived at the village of Rooah, which has some gardens and wells of water.

We passed several caravans of Bedowins, journeying to, or returning from Maskat. Their complexion is much fairer than that of any other Arabs that I have yet seen, and their stature, though short, is well proportioned. Their hair, which is permitted to flow in plaited folds as low as the waist, gives them a very striking and martial appearance when seated with their sword and shield, cross-legged, on their war camels. They have dark, lively, expressive eyes; a well-formed nose and mouth; and their pearly white teeth offer a fine contrast to those of the town Arabs. They seem a laughing, good-humoured race, and chatted

freely, as I rode at their side, of their country and its inhabitants. Now, and for some time afterwards, I found it difficult, without the aid of an interpreter, to maintain a conversation with the Omány Bedowins. The dialect which had served me in my communication with the tribes along the shores of the Red Sea was understood but very partially here. I am convinced, however, this could only occur to a person who had but a superficial knowledge of the language: one completely versed in it would find little difficulty in making himself understood in any part of the country.

After sunset we continued, occasionally, to pass groups of Bedowins, who had withdrawn some short distance from the road, and were seated with their camels round a fire. It seems customary on these occasions for neither party to proffer a salutation, which is contrary to the practice when they meet in the day, for then they exchange several sentences. About an hour before midnight, the loud and deep barking of some shepherd dogs denoted our approach to a village, which we entered a few minutes after-

wards, and, after winding our way through several lanes, with large trees on either side, overhanging the path, we entered an extensive building erected for the use of travellers. The night air being cold, my guides soon prepared a fire, and a meal of rice and fish, of which we all partook most heartily. In the course of my several journeys I have been never solicitous or particular about my place of repose, and I was much amused this night at the remarks of the Bedowins, when, instead of drawing near to the fire, as they were all anxiously doing, they saw me wrap myself up in a boat cloak, and lie down on a chinammed platform raised in the open air in the garden.

Early this morning, I visited the spring which was the object of my journey. The water gushes with much violence from an aperture at the base of a hill of clay ironstone. Veins of a crystallized quartz run in a diagonal direction through the rock, and large fragments have been dislodged from it. Some faint indications of copper might be distinguished between the inner layers, but no traces of volcanic action were anywhere

to be discovered. Close adjoining to the spot from whence the water issues a small square reservoir has been constructed for the convenience of those who come to bathe there. Immersed in this, a thermometer, Fahrenheit, indicated one hundred and ten degrees, which was two degrees less than at the rock. After repeated trials I found it difficult to decide that it had any peculiarity of taste or smell. At one time I was induced to consider it slightly chalybeate, and at another to be in no higher degree saline; but, in neither instance, could I have given an opinion decidedly, and it may, therefore, be considered that, in both these respects, it differs but little from the water obtained in other parts of the country. Here the natives, after placing it to cool in porous pans, pronounce it excellent, drinking no other. It was evident that neither its heat, nor any other quality which it may possess, prevents its nourishing the surrounding vegetation. As a cure for cutaneous and other local disorders, these waters enjoy a great reputation amongst the Bedowins and town Arabs, the former frequently undertaking long and painful jour-

neys from a great distance in the interior, that they may remain and use them for several days. Although the temperature was so high, yet I witnessed the submersion of several of the patients, who were kept under the surface by force for some time. One, an old man of eighty, was so much exhausted by this rough treatment, that he appeared in a dying state: yet I was told that, if he lived, the operation would be repeated after an interval of two hours, for the natives believe if the waters fail in producing their desired effect, it is only because they have not been used sufficiently often. A few yards from the bath there is a small mosque, in which an old priest resides, who is ever ready to assist with his prayers those who may require them.

After leaving the reservoir, the water runs into a large shallow tank or basin, in which it cools ere it is permitted to reach the vegetation or trees, and numerous rills conduct it over the face of the country. The portion thus irrigated forms the seaward front or base of hills which extend, by a succession of yet higher ranges, into the interior of the coun-

try. The sun had just risen, and the cool temperature of the morning air felt delightfully refreshing. The smooth surface of the sea, at a distance of four or five miles, was receiving a rosy tint, which the Island of Burka, now before us, also shared, and so clear was the atmosphere that I was almost tempted to believe I saw the Persian shore.

Nearly all the fruits and vegetables cultivated in other parts of Omán seem to be found here, and in size and luxuriance of growth the trees equal those of India.

A small tribe, the Benî Wahab, has held possession of these grounds for many ages; but in the hot weather, during the late harvest, the town Arabs arrive in great numbers. I was told as many as seven or eight thousand at that season of plenty and happiness take up their quarters here, and sit all day under the trees, reciting verses from the Koran, or slumbering in repose beneath their shadowy branches, which at once afford them food and shelter.

At noon to-day our thermometer rose to ninety-four degrees in the shade, and some idea of the heat in the warm season may,

from this fact, be estimated: yet shortly after the sun sinks behind the mountains, this parching heat was exchanged for a piercing cold. To the natives, this extraordinary fluctuation is not attended with any ill effects, and they pronounce it at all seasons to be the most healthy spot in Omán; but it has proved fatal to one or more of almost every party of Europeans which has ever ventured to visit them.

CHAPTER IV.

Departure for Súr — Devil's Gap — Timidity of Arab Mariners —Kilhát—Ancient Gold Coins—Breakfast with a Sheïkh— Account of Súr — Hospitable treatment — Market — Date Groves—Exports and Imports—Arab Shepherds—Anecdote of Arab Girls—Departure—Babel Rufsur—Watch Dogs—Feuds — The Beni-Abú-Hasan Tribe — Their numbers — Interview with the Sheïkh—Attempts to deter the Author from proceeding.

November 25th. A boat having been prepared for me, I left Maskat, with no small satisfaction, for Súr; for its climate, at all times unfavourable to the European constitution, was particularly insalubrious at this period, and the number of deaths which occurred daily, even among the natives, was very considerable. A poor Frenchman who had fled here, after escaping a hundred dangers subsequent to the defeat of the Turks in the Assaïr country, was dying in a vessel alongside of that which I had quitted, and a con-

siderable number of the crew of an English ship lying there were seriously ill.

Off the Devil's Gap, a remarkable gorge or opening in the mountain range contiguous to the sea-shore, we experienced a heavy squall, during which I had a good opportunity of witnessing the timidity and irresolution of Arab mariners. We shipped a good deal of water, and were really at one time in an awkward situation. The passage continued stormy, with occasional heavy showers of rain, to Kilhát, abreast of which we anchored for a few hours, while I went on shore to examine the ruins.

Kilhát is an ancient town, mentioned by several of the Arabian authors. Its ruins cover an extensive tract, but only one building remains in a state of tolerable preservation. This is a small mosque, which, judging from the writing on various parts of it, has been frequented by Indian Mussulmans. Its interior is covered with party-coloured glazed tiles, on which are inscribed, in relievo, sentences from the Koran. To the northward of these ruins there is a small fishing village, the inhabitants of which also

occasionally employ themselves in digging amidst the ruins for gold coins, the metal of which in Maskat is considered to be of the purest kind. Some of these bear the name of the Caliph Haroun el Rashid.

Quitting Kilhát with a pleasant breeze, we reached Súr shortly after sunset, and anchored in the inner harbour, within a few yards of the shore. From Maskat to this port the mountain ranges approach close to the sea, and are very elevated: they bear the name of Jebel Syenne and Rackee, and are intersected by several valleys, some of which are filled with streams of fresh water. Near to these are a few groves of the date palm, and, though the plain is cultivated, the hills are destitute of trees and verdure.

November 28*th*. I found the Sheïkh this morning waiting on the beach to receive me, and, after breakfasting with him on dates and milk, we walked over the town.

Súr, the port of the district of Jaïlán, is situated on a low sandy shore, utterly destitute of vegetation or trees. It is merely a large collection of huts erected on either side a deep lagoon, which are separately occupied

by different tribes. They are very compactly constructed with the branches of the date palm, are airy and spacious, and, as the streets are kept very clean, the whole wears a neat and pleasing appearance. There are no shops here, the bazar being situated about a mile and a half from the beach, where a considerable number of the inhabitants reside. Thither, accompanied by its Sheïkh, who had been sent for directly intelligence was received of my arrival, I set out, and was much gratified at finding when I reached the village that my tent was pitched in a delightful spot, and that guards had been placed, and every precaution taken for the safety of my baggage. Here I was to remain until camels and guides could be collected for my journey.

A daily market is held on this spot, at which grain, fruit, and vegetables are exposed for sale. The houses, though small, are strongly built of stone and cement, and the largest and best are occupied by the Banians and people from Cutch, who monopolise a considerable share of the trade. On the west quarter there is a large fort, mounting a few

old guns, but both it and they are in a very ruinous state.

The contiguous country is cultivated in patches of considerable extent, and the date groves are numerous and extensive. It is, however, to commercial pursuits that the people of Súr are principally devoted, possessing a good harbour. Belonging to the port they have about three hundred bagalás of different sizes, which trade, during the fair season, to and between the shores of India, Africa, and the Arabian and Persian Gulfs. Its own exports and imports are trifling, the former being dates and salt fish, the latter grain, cloth, &c.; but the profit derived from the interchange of the various productions of the quarters I have named, is sufficient to support them in affluence during the adverse period of the year. They acknowledge the authority, but pay no tribute to Sayyid S'aid. Súr is thought to be of great antiquity—it is supposed to have been occupied by the Syrians.

December 1st. Early this morning I set out, accompanied by a guide, to visit the northern range of mountains. The road be-

ing impracticable for horses, we procured asses, which carried us at a brisk pace in two hours and a half to the foot of the hills. Here we dismounted, and commenced our ascent on foot, by a rugged defile. After an hour's fagging, climbing in many places rather than walking, we breathed for a short space near to a small hamlet, and, after quenching our thirst at a stream of pure water, which rushes through the valley to the plains below, again set forward. Four hours more, during which we crossed several deep ravines, also well watered, and interspersed with date trees and patches of cultivation, brought us to the summit; but, beyond the view we obtained of the surrounding country, and the delightful coolness of the atmosphere, there was little to repay us for our trouble. Bare tabular patches of limestone rock showed their bleak and wasted surface in all directions. A few sheep and numerous goats were browsing on the scanty herbage the other parts afforded, but, hitherto, we saw no human being to break the solitude of the scene.

From this point, which forms the cape, or

south-east extremity of the seaward range, to an extensive valley abreast of Kilhát, the mountainous tract is called Futlah. In the narrow ravines by which it is intersected there are said to be sixty villages, or rather hamlets, containing about one thousand five hundred inhabitants, who bear the general appellation of the Benî Kaled and Benî Daud. About six hundred of the former occupy a valley bearing the same name on the south-west side of the mountains, so very narrow and steep that one part in the line of its bed can only be crossed by means of ropes. Independent of the numerous streams and rills by which the several valleys are watered, rain is more frequently experienced here than on the plains, and a considerable quantity of grain and fruit is reared. One tenth of the produce of the soil goes to the Sheïkh of Súr.

Proceeding for a short distance along this ridge we fell in with some shepherds, who testified at first no little surprise at our appearance, but a few words from my guide reassured them, and we accepted with much thankfulness an invitation to their mid-day

meal of dates and milk. A huge rock, standing upright on the plain, sheltered them from the wind, which blew with much strength and keenness. In this group, beyond a somewhat fairer complexion and taller stature, I saw little to distinguish them from their neighbours of the plains. When we had finished our repast, our new acquaintances insisted on my visiting their huts. I found them situated in a small dell, near a stream of running water. They were of a circular form, the walls of loose stones, and the roofs neatly thatched with a description of reed which grows here in great abundance, but the interior exhibited neither space nor comfort. I had scarcely seated myself on a skin, spread on the ground in one of these dwellings, when some young and very pretty females entered, bringing with them a huge bowl of milk. Out of compliment to them I took a long draught; but no, this was insufficient. Was it bad?—try again, and again! In vain I extolled it to the skies; I was not permitted to desist until I had swelled almost to suffocation, and sworn by the beard of the Prophet that I could and would take no

more. They were then delighted, and we became such excellent friends that, with the assistance of a few presents and some fair speeches, we parted with expressions of mutual regret.

Our return was by a path more steep and rugged, if possible, than that by which we ascended, and I did not, in consequence, arrive at the foot of the mountains until some time after sunset. No asses were to be found: the night was dark, with occasional showers of rain: we lost our path several times, and did not reach the tent until nearly midnight.

During my stay here, I received the following friendly and characteristic epistle from his Highness, the Imám:—

"In the name of God, most merciful, from Sayyid the Sooltan to his Excellency, the esteemed, respected, beloved, the perfect Captain Wellsted, from the eastern government, peace be with you from the Most High God; and, after that your letter reached us, which was a proof of your love in remembering us, we greatly rejoiced at your arriving at Súr, and your departure for Ja'ilán, which is as

we directed it, and from thence to Semmed, and which was gratifying to you, and, therefore, pleasing to us; and, furthermore, anything which you require from us, whether little or much, it is only for you to request it, and it is on our part to grant it. Peace be to you, and farewell.

"True,

"SAYYID SOOLTAN."

December 2nd. My camels and guides were collected this morning, and I left Súk el Súr, where I had received every attention from its Sheïkh. At 12·3, P.M., we were clear of the skirts of the village, and entered a shallow valley. Rounded masses of limestone formed its bed, between which a few stunted acacia bushes, the only signs of vegetable life, forced their way. The hills on either hand were of a light red, or yellow sandstone, with an occasional streak of orange or purple. Although in October, November, and December, passing showers are here frequent, the natives say that heavy continued rain is only experienced once in three years, and that the bed of this valley is then filled with a swollen and rapid stream,

that renders it impassable for camels. About two we arrived at the pass of Babel Rufsur, where there is a small tower, and a piece of artillery. These and similar other buildings were erected by the Imám to check the incursions of the Wahhábís: they have now, however, been all permitted to fall to decay. Some streams of fresh water, with an occasional date grove, show themselves between this and the termination of the valley, which we reached at six, P.M. Hence we continued over a plain country, until eleven, P.M., when we halted near some hamlets, where the dogs kept up such a furious barking, and were withal so fierce, that my guides, although in want of food, were afraid to attempt to pass them. The night was clear and cold, and a heavy dew was falling. The Bedowins slept in a circle, and placed the baggage in the centre.

Thursday, December 3rd. Near to where we have encamped there are three walled villages, Homaïdah, El Kamil, and El Wafee, severally containing about two hundred houses, and each having a small fort. Both within and without the walls, the country is

well cultivated, and some streams of running water which cross their grounds afford abundant means of irrigation. The inhabitants evinced so much dislike at my looking over these fields, that I was obliged to quit them.

At 11·30 we continued our route over an extensive plain, where the soil was alternately either of a very loose drift sand, or a whitish indurated clay, covered with sayel bushes (male acacia). Parties of Bedowins, on their way to Súr, occasionally passed us, but, as the principal tribes were now at feud, a single individual was rarely met with beyond the precincts of the villages, nor was it without some precaution that our own party proceeded. Immediately that another caffilla was perceived our camels were brought together, the guards, as we approached nearer, advanced a-head, mutual inquiries ensued, and we then passed on. Any authority which Sayyid S'aid has acquired over this district, by the liberal distribution of presents to its Sheïkhs, is more nominal than real. The Bedowins follow up their own quarrels, plundering, and not unfrequently killing each other, with the same

freedom as if they were on the Desert. Scarcely a day passed during my stay that I did not hear of some transaction of this nature. At 3·30 we halted amidst the dwellings of the Beni-Abú-Hasan Bedowins, which are mostly huts, erected beneath their date groves. They are very straggling, and we were three quarters of an hour passing from one extremity to the other. As soon as the intelligence of our arrival had spread, they crowded around us in great numbers. Their curiosity was unbounded, and they expressed their astonishment at all they saw in the most boisterous manner, leaping and yelling as if they were half crazy. My small tent (notwithstanding the presence, and repeated desire of their Sheïkh) was soon completely filled, and I felt heartily glad when the approach of sunset sent them all to their houses.

The Beni-Abú-Hasan Bedowins are estimated at one thousand two hundred men, exclusive of women and children, but they cannot muster more than seven hundred matchlocks. With no other employment than tending their date trees, which occupies

but a small portion of their time, they lead an idle life, and are constantly engaged in quarrels or disputes either amidst themselves or their neighbours. In appearance they are the wildest and most uncouth beings I have hitherto met with: they go almost naked, and their hair is worn long, reaching nearly to the girdle.

After sunset I saw no one but the Sheïkh, who came alone for the purpose of dissuading me from visiting the Benî-Abú-'Alî Bedowins, whom he characterised as being disaffected to Sayyid S'aid, hating the English, and, in a word, "perfect devils;" but, as I knew the two tribes were at open variance, I evinced less disposition to follow his advice than he probably anticipated, and he took his leave, in consequence, somewhat coolly.

In truth, I was not without apprehensions as to the treatment I should receive from his neighbours, but my reasons will be understood when I state the circumstances which brought the English into collision with them.

CHAPTER V.

The Beni-Abú-'Alí—Their origin—Sayyid Sa'id's ineffectual efforts to subdue them—Obtains the assistance of British Troops—Disastrous expedition of Captain Thompson—Bravery of the Beni-Abú-'Alí—Massacre of the British—Gallantry of the Imám—Expedition from Bombay—Attack upon the Beni-Abú-'Alí Fort—Fortitude of their Women—Final defeat and subjugation—The Author's reception at their Encampment—Deference paid to the British name—Hospitality—Oblivion of the past—Burckhardt—Visit from the young Sheïkh—Discourse upon Women—European Customs—Tombs of the Vanquished—Contrast between the British and the Bedowin Soldier.

The Beni-Abú-'Alí tribe came originally from a small district in Nesjd, where a remnant of them is said still to exist. They accompanied those who separated from Alí's army during the struggle with Mowaiyah for the Caliphate, and continued to follow the Beazi tenets until the invasion of Abdul Uziz, in 1811, when they became converts to the Wahhábís faith. From that period they have been an object of the most deadly hatred to the other tribes in Omán; and after Abdul

Uziz was beaten back at Bedíah, their best efforts were necessary to prevent their total annihilation; but, continuing to temporise until they had erected a very strong fort, they, in return, became the aggressors, and, after carrying fire and sword into every part of the neighbouring district, became so formidable, that they were soon left in undisputed possession of their own and several of the neighbouring districts.

At a later period, several attempts were made by the Imám to dislodge or destroy them, but all his exertions proving ineffectual, in 1821 he made a requisition for assistance to Captain Thompson, who, after the fall of Rás-el-Khaïmah, in the preceding year, had been left with a small force of eight hundred men, principally sepoys, at the Island of Kishm*. Under an impression that some portion of the tribe had been engaged in extensive acts of piracy, that officer immediately dispatched a messenger with a letter of remonstrance to them, but he was massacred almost as soon as he landed. Captain Thomp-

* See Captain Thompson's Report, dated 18th November, 1820. —*Asiatic Journal*, vol. xi. p. 593.

son, on the receipt of this intelligence, no longer hesitated to accompany a force which the Imám had already prepared to act against them, and, landing at Súr, he formed a junction, and they marched together against Benú-Abú-'Alí, which is situated about fifty miles, in a direct line, from their place of disembarkment. The Bedowins retreated before them, and occupied the date grove which surrounds the fort. After our troops had passed Benú-Abú-Hasan, and were sweeping round a hill, the greater part being in a line parallel to the trees, the whole tribe, who had hitherto lain concealed beneath them, suddenly rushed forth with loud cries, and threw themselves headlong on the British force. Before the latter could be formed, or almost before the order could be given, the Bedowins were amidst them, the sepoys could not use their bayonets, but were hewn down by the long swords of their foes as they stood, and the whole soon became a mass of inextricable confusion. No quarter was given, and an officer, presenting his sword as a token of submission, was, at the same time, pierced through the back with a spear. They dragged the surgeon, who

was sick, from his palanquin, and immediately butchered him; and the British force, leaving two-thirds of their number dead upon the field, were compelled to retreat, and, after an undisturbed march of about eight days, Captain Thompson, two officers, and about one hundred and fifty men, the only survivors, succeeded in reaching Maskat*.

Intelligence of this disaster was soon carried to Bombay, and a large force of three thousand men, under Sir Lionel Smith, again landed†. Nowise daunted by their superior numbers, the Bedowins, in concert with the Benî Geneba, planned a night attack, which, had it proved successful, would have placed the British force in a singular dilemma. The General and his staff were encamped at some distance from the army, and it was proposed by the Bedowins to cut off the whole of them.

* The Imám, with the remnant of his army, accompanied our troops during their march, and it would be an injustice to the noble and gallant character of this prince, were I to omit mentioning the resolute bravery with which he maintained his ground, even when wounded, and his determination to retreat no farther than Beni Hasan, if he had not been deserted by a large portion of his army.

† In January, 1821.

But, either through mistake or treachery, the latter were not at the rendezvous at the appointed time, and the former proceeded alone. Having reached the General's camp, they hamstrung several of the horses, and committed other damages, besides cutting down several men. They then effected their escape without the loss of one of their own number.

When our force on their march had nearly reached the fort, the Arabs met them on a large plain. Their number did not exceed eight hundred: many of their women had now joined their ranks, and they rushed on with the same impetuosity as before, but were met at every point by the bayonet: they, nevertheless, fought with amazing obstinacy and courage, and did not give up the contest until nearly the whole of them were slain or desperately wounded*: amidst the latter was their Sheïkh, who, with the few survivors, was taken prisoner to Bombay. After being confined there for almost two years they were released; much attention was then shown them, and they were sent back

* In March, 1821.—*Asiatic Journal*, xii. 362.

to their own country with presents and with money to rebuild their town; but since the period of their defeat no European has entered their territory.

After my noon observation of the sun, a short journey of two hours brought me on to Benî-Abú-'Alî. A considerable crowd followed after me until I halted, when I was soon joined by the young Sheïkh and the principal men of the tribe. No sooner had I proclaimed myself an Englishman, and expressed my intention of passing a few days amidst them, than the whole camp was in a tumult of acclamation; the few old guns they had were fired from the different towers, matchlocks were kept going till sunset, and both old and young, male and female, strove to do their best to entertain me: they pitched my tent, slaughtered sheep, and brought milk by gallons. A reception so truly warm and hospitable not a little surprised me.

Before us lay the ruins of the fort we had dismantled,—my tent was pitched on the very spot where we had nearly annihilated their tribe, reducing them from being the most powerful in Omán to their present petty

state. All, however, in the confidence I had shown in thus throwing myself amidst them, was forgotten.

Although so near the sea-coast, the Bedowins of this and the neighbouring districts have remained uncontaminated by any intercourse with strangers, for they neither intermarry nor mix with them; and there is, therefore, reason to believe that they preserve, in its strictest forms, all the simplicity and purity of the interior tribes.

It is to be regretted that we know so little of the character and habits of the true Bedowins. Those on the frontiers of Syria and Mesopotamia have been vitiated by their intercourse with the Turks and other nations. The same remark applies to the only parts of Hedjas and Yemen which our travellers have visited. Burckhardt, though well aware of, and as well calculated to supply this deficiency, was prevented by sickness from doing so, otherwise it was his intention to have passed a few months in the interior provinces. My object, therefore, while entering fully on what came under my observation during my stay amidst these tribes, now and

on subsequent occasions, will be to furnish something towards this desideratum.

After their evening prayers, the young Sheïkh, accompanied by about forty men, came to the tent, and expressed his intention of remaining with me as a guard during the night. To ask the whole party in was impossible, and to invite a few only would have displeased others, so I took my carpet outside amidst them. It was one of those clear and beautiful nights which are only met with on or near the Desert: the atmosphere felt pleasantly cool, and we soon commenced an animated conversation. They were not wholly ignorant of our customs: some information on these points they had gathered from the men who had been prisoners of war in India; but their accounts were either so limited or exaggerated, that they served rather to increase than to allay the feelings of curiosity. The nature and observance of our religion formed, of course, their first subject of inquiry, and my opinion as to its comparative merits with the Mohammedan was demanded. It is generally a good maxim to allow yourself to be apparently beaten on

questions of theology: I could not, however, at first, resist the temptation of leading to some of their least defensible doctrines, and stating the arguments which could be brought to bear against them; but they evinced so little prejudice or fanaticism on these points that I regretted having done so, and, to make amends, most willingly subscribed to the opinion of one of their old men, that either faith was best adapted for the country and people who practised it.

From this the conversation turned on our females. Was it true, they inquired, that those of high birth and condition danced in public, and went unveiled? Here they had me on the hip, as they fancied; and the rogues chuckled whilst awaiting my reply. I confessed it was, but we did not, like them, attach any indelicacy to it; that our females were never secluded, but were instructed in useful knowledge, and allowed equal liberty with the other sex, and that we found our advantage in doing so; for, instead of being objects of mere sensual desire, they then became companions. Here, however, I gained not a single convert. "Let them work," said

they," and attend to their household affairs. What business have they with reading and writing, which is only fit for Moolahs?" "The women to the distaff, the men to their swords," said a venerable old man, with a white beard, repeating a proverb which was echoed by all present. I wished some of their dames had been within hearing, they would have pitched their note in a minor key.

The females of this tribe possess a considerable share of influence in all their councils, and in the absence of their Sheïkh, who had proceeded on the pilgrimage to Mecca, his wife and sister, at this moment, governed the tribe. Their remarks on some of our customs were highly amusing.

"We observed," said they, "that when you sat down to table each man had before him a small and a large glass; why apply to the small one so often when it would save so much trouble to fill the larger, and drink it off at once? Why did we send the ladies away before we had finished our wine, and yet rise up when they left?" &c., &c.

One of the slaves kept pounding coffee

from the time they first arrived. The pestle on these occasions is made to strike the sides and bottom of the mortar in such time and manner as to cause it to resemble the chiming of bells, and the slave usually accompanies it with a song. As we chatted away, although Wahhábís, they drank their coffee as fast as it was brought, and we did not separate until a very late hour *.

Saturday, December 5th. When I awoke this morning I found a man kneeling by me with a bowl of milk in his hand. I drank it off, and, accompanied by my escort, walked over the plain where the British had been encamped, and visited the scene of Captain Thompson's defeat; but, on either spot, every trace of the fierce encounter had disappeared. Near the former some rude graves were pointed out to me, but no "frail memorial" served to indicate whether their tenants were of the party of the victors or of the vanquished. It may serve to show the siccity,

* I had with me some cigars, but, knowing the aversion those of that sect have to the use of tobacco, I refrained from producing them;—but, by some means, they discovered they were in my possession, and insisted on my smoking, which, to relieve myself from their importunities, I was compelled to *do*.

as well as purity of the atmosphere, to mention that the bodies of those slain on the first attack were found lying upon the sands untouched by worms, and showing not the slightest symptoms of decay.

The Bedowins evinced no disinclination to converse on the subject of the war, and their own defeat and losses they spoke of in the most perfect good humour. They were equally merry in their observations on the English during their stay in Jaïlán: their mode of attack, the arms and accoutrements of the soldiers, &c., being severally criticised with much shrewdness. To an Arab, who goes to war with no greater burden than his camel can well approach or retreat with, seldom, indeed, carrying anything beyond his arms, a small bag of moistened flour, and a skin of water, the quantity of baggage which accompanied our troops must have been not a little surprising; but what excited their utmost astonishment was, that we should carry casks of liquor for the men. This circumstance was afterwards frequently mentioned in Omán.

CHAPTER VI.

Sooltan—Visit to the Sheïkh's Wife and Sister—Attachment to Ancient Customs—Admiration of the English—Peasants—Speech of Bedowin Ladies—Feast—War Dance—Camel Race—Arrival of a Geneba Chief—The Author proposes a visit to his Horde—Departure—Anecdote—Features of the Desert—Appearance of my Companion—Costume—Love of Song—Musical Instruments—Summer Tree—Tales of Love and War—Intense Cold—Game of Leap Frog—Sheïkh's Wives—Interior of a Tent—Foliage of the Summer Tree—Description of the Beni Geneba—Singular substitute for a Canoe—Shark Fishing—Salubrious Climate—Modes of Punishment—Start for Beni-Abú-'Ali—A Bedowin Foray.

TOWARDS noon I went, accompanied by his son Sooltan, to visit the wife and sister of the old Sheïkh, who was now absent on the pilgrimage to Mecca. We passed through a dirty court-yard filled with cattle into a small apartment, the doorway of which was crossed by a stile, to secure it from their intrusion. This, however, seemed insufficient, for seve-

ral had managed to leap it, and were being ejected when we arrived. The Bedowins in the Desert find it necessary for better security to keep their cattle near them, and, as they are the last people in the world to abandon old customs, they do the same in the towns when they reside there. Some months ago, when the Assaïr tribe occupied Mocha, they kept their sheep with them in the upper apartments of the very lofty houses of that town. The ladies received me seated on a platform, raised about two feet from the ground, and completely veiled from head to foot, not a finger during the whole of the interview was visible; but, in order to compensate, in some measure, for this disappointment, some very pretty Abyssinian females, who were not veiled, remained in the room to attend on them. They expressed themselves highly delighted that an Englishman had, at last, come among them, but spoke of Sayyid S'aid with contempt, and did not conceal their desire to throw off their present very slight connexion with him.

"It is the protection of the English we want," they observed, "and if your govern-

ment would grant us that, and should afterwards require a port on the coast, by which they can open a trade with Omán, as well as the interior, we will gladly furnish them with one." As they grew more talkative, it was with difficulty I prevented them from sending forth amidst the mountains to collect the whole tribe.

A suite of tents, and several other articles, were pointed out to me, which had been sent by our government as presents to them. Notwithstanding we may, at present, entertain very different sentiments respecting our first attack on this people, and it is known that at least one high and influential member of the government did, yet the whole affair was quite to a Bedowin's taste, and both here and in every other quarter I heard nothing but praises of the English. "We have fought,—you have made us every compensation in your power for those who fell,—and we should now be friends," observed these ladies, when speaking of the transaction; but they never, it will be seen, have forgiven Sayyid S'aid.

A meal, consisting of camels' flesh, a

sheep, boiled whole, and large bowls of rice, had, in the mean time, been preparing. Directly it was brought in the ladies retired, leaving Sooltán and myself alone to partake of it. Upon my return to the tent I found there the whole of the tribe, at Beni-Abú-'Alí, consisting of about two hundred and fifty men, assembled for the purpose of exhibiting their war dance. They had formed a circle, within which five or six of their number now entered. After walking leisurely round for some time, each challenged one of the spectators by striking him gently with the flat of his sword. His adversary immediately leaped forth, and a feigned combat ensued. They have but two cuts, one directly downwards at the head, and the other horizontally across the legs. They parry neither with the sword nor shield, but avoid the blows by leaping or bounding backwards. The blade of their sword is three feet in length, straight, thin, double-edged, and as sharp as a razor. As they carry it upright before them, by a peculiar motion of their wrist they cause it to vibrate in a very remarkable manner, which has a singularly striking effect when they are

assembled in any considerable number. The shield is attached to the sword by a leathern thong; it measures about fourteen inches in diameter, and is generally used to parry the thrust of the spear, or jambeer. It was part of the entertainment to fire off their match-locks under the legs of some one of the spectators, who appeared too intent on watching the game to observe their approach, and any signs of alarm which incautiously escaped the individual, added greatly to their mirth. Their only music consisted of a small drum, beaten by a slave.

After exercising their skill in firing at a mark, during which some capital shots were made, they all dispersed. Towards evening a large party of Geneba Bedowins arrived, and two of their camels were matched to run against the same number belonging to the Beni-Abú-'Alí. As I had never before witnessed a camel race, I felt much interest in the spectacle. They rode them with nose-strings as well as bridles, but the animals did not appear to take an equal relish in the sport with their masters, for they could not be set going without much trouble, and were

afterwards very untractable. Their speed, when at full gallop, I did not think very great—perhaps a third less than that of a horse, and when they are urged to this pace their gait and movement appear excessively awkward.

Finding the Sheïkh who accompanied the party was a lively intelligent fellow, I proposed to take a run for a few days with him in his own country. After inquiring my motives, and finding that it was merely to live amongst them for that time, he gave a hearty consent. In the evening I was visited, as usual, by a large party, and we had some singing in the Bedowin style.

December 6th. I found the Sheïkh and his followers, consisting of fifty Bedowins, mounted on camels, this morning all ready for starting, and we were soon clear of the skirts of the town, and away at a full trot over the Desert. The air was cold and pure, the sun just sufficiently high to render its warmth agreeable, while the wild appearance and movements of my Bedowin friends gave an exhilarating novelty to my sensations: even the very solitude of the scene rendered it the more pleasing. While sweeping across

these solitary and boundless wastes, although destitute of trees, mountains, and water, or any of the features common to softer regions, there is something in their severely simple features, their nakedness and immensity, which reminds me of the trackless ocean, and impresses the soul with a feeling of sublimity. The aspect of my companion is in perfect keeping with the peculiar attributes of his native land. His sinewy form, and clean and compact limbs, are revealed by the scantiness of his garments: his dark and ruddy countenance is lighted up by the kindling of his resolute eye: his demeanour is honest and frank, and his whole appearance breathes a manly contempt of hardships.

"You wished," said the Sheïkh, "to see the country of the Bedowins—*this*," he continued, striking his spear into the firm sand, "*this* is the country of the Bedowins." Neither he nor his companions wore more than a single cloth around their waist, all the rest of the body being left bare. Their hair, which is permitted to flow unconfined as low as their waist, and is usually kept loaded

with grease, protects them, in a measure, from the intensity of the sun's rays, but they adopt no other covering. For a short time after leaving the town they kept together, but now they were away in all directions, chasing each other with loud shouts across the plains. In this manner we continued over a level country, intersected by traces of numerous torrents, for about four hours, and then crossed a narrow ridge of low, calcareous hills: in two hours more we entered amidst some mounds, thickly interspersed with the summer or gum Arabic tree (*Acacia vera*). Very little of the gum is collected by the Bedowins, who complain that the price it brings in Maskat does not repay them for their trouble. At 4·30, we halted near some wells of brackish water. Our course hitherto has been south-south-west, and the distance we have travelled is forty-two miles. A party of the natives, who joined us directly we halted, were sent on for rice and dates; we, in the mean time, had lighted a fire under a large tree, and lost no time, as soon as they returned, which was not till sunset, in cooking what they brought, when I

with the rest, made a very hearty meal. I had with me neither servant nor baggage, conceiving that, even for the short time I should remain amongst them, the objects of my journey would be best attained by adopting their mode of living; and the result did not disappoint me. Among all these tribes there appears to exist a considerable portion of traditionary lore, of which the details of the wars and predatory excursions of themselves and ancestors form the greatest and most attractive portion. The exploits of a favourite horse or camel are dwelt on with equal enthusiasm. I sat up drinking coffee, and listening to their recitation of these events, until a very late hour. Several watch-dogs kept guard round our encampment during the night *.

* The Bedowin still retains that passionate love of song for which his race has ever been distinguished. Whether tending his flock, beguiling the tediousness of a journey, or seated after his evening cheer at the fire, the Arab constantly breaks out into some ditty, the theme of which is either love or war. Seated cross-legged under the scanty shade of the date-palm, I have often listened to one of them thus amusing himself for hours. The only accompaniment is a rude guitar with two strings. Although nothing can be further removed from our idea of melody, yet their sentiment and expression are admirably suited to the scenes they describe, and are also strikingly illustrative of the peculiar character of their

Sunday, December 7th. Towards midnight we had hard rain, which continued without intermission until sunrise. It was piercingly cold, and, as we could obtain no shelter, we were thoroughly drenched. To the Bedowins it afforded infinite pleasure, as they were now sure of pasturage for some time. At daylight, to divest our limbs of their numbness, we jumped and ran races, until I bethought myself of our English game of leap-frog. Very great was the diversion this afforded them, until our breakfast of milk and dates was announced, after which we packed up, and resumed our journey. At eight, A.M., we continued to thread our way to the west-south-west, between the same sandy mounds as yesterday, until four, P.M., when we arrived at a small encampment, in which dwelt the Sheïkh's wives: shortly after-

minds. Combinations the most harsh and rugged form the most striking feature of their music, as often, when their movements are grave and slow, as when they are brisk and lively. In the former they often exhibit much grave and melancholy thought, in the latter they not unfrequently spring up simultaneously, and join, to the full extent of their voices, in a rude chorus. I found no surer way of exciting a kindly feeling towards myself, when among this rude people, than by listening with apparent interest to these performances.

wards, the good dames sent for me. I found them in a small hut of a conical form, constructed of poles, fastened to the upper part with leathern thongs, and covered with skins. It was so very small, that two persons lying down would fill its whole area. The women were seated on an old carpet near a good fire, and I was invited to place myself between them. They were unveiled, and entered freely into conversation with me. After answering a hundred questions connected with the English and their country, coffee, and then milk, were introduced. They brought the latter in a bowl wove from the husk of the cocoa-nut, but its texture was so close that none escaped. I saw no other furniture except a few skins, for holding dates or water; an earthen pot for boiling coffee; and two or three copper vessels for rice; together with a few ragged camolines, mats or skins, on which they sleep. A heap of salt fish lay in one corner. After making them a few trifling presents, with which they were highly delighted, I took my leave, and walked out with the Sheïkh to seek for botanical specimens, of which I found a great abundance.

I remark both here and in other parts of Arabia, that the trees which are at all umbrageous, have the ground immediately beneath them, even in the most sultry weather, damp with moisture, and generally covered with a thin sprinkling of grass, on which the cattle feed with much avidity. This appears owing to some peculiar property which their foliage possesses of retaining the falling dew, which is usually more copious in the Desert than elsewhere, for I have frequently in the morning observed the leaves of the sumr tree (*Acacia vera*) to be slightly curved upwards, with a drop or two of water in them. These, as the sun exerts its influence, assume their natural form, and the moisture is deposited on the ground beneath. Under their shade, the more vigorous vegetation which springs up after rain derives nourishment for some time after that which is more exposed appears dried up and withered. Nevertheless, it is very remarkable that the most succulent plants are found in those spots which receive the full force of the sun's rays.

The Benî Geneba, or "Wandering Children," are a scattered race of about three

thousand five hundred men, the greater number of whom are found occupying the country south from Beni-Abú-'Alí to Cape Isolette; but there are several families who live intermixed with other Bedowins on the intermediate wastes between the Great Desert to the westward, as well as on the Oasis of Omán, together with some few who reside with their principal Sheïkh at Súr. To this individual all grave offences are referred, and he is responsible to the Imám for the general conduct of the tribe. The Beni Geneba present some peculiarities which render them, in a measure, distinct from other Bedowins. Although, as I have noticed, their numerical superiority is not great, yet they spread over a large extent of country, and are divided into two distinct classes; those who subsist by fishing, and such as follow pastoral pursuits. We will first consider the former.

It is a remarkable fact that a race in many respects similar is found in almost every part of the coast of Arabia, and even along the north-east shore of India and Macrau. In some districts, as those, for instance, which

lie to the northward of Jiddah in the Red Sea, they are considered as a separate and degraded race, with whom the Bedowins will neither eat, intermarry, nor associate; but with this and several other tribes, so degrading a distinction does not exist. The whole coast abounds with fish, and, as the natives have but few canoes, they generally substitute a single inflated skin, or two of these, having a flat board across them. On this frail contrivance the fisher seats himself, and either casts his small hand-net, or plays his hook and line. Some capital sport must arise occasionally when the sharks, which are here very numerous and large, gorge the bait; for whenever this occurs, unless the angler cuts his line, and that, as the shark is more valued than any other fish, he is often unwilling to do, nothing can prevent his rude machine from following their track, and the fisherman is sometimes, in consequence, carried out a great distance to sea. It requires considerable dexterity to secure these monsters, for when they are hauled up near to the skins they struggle a good deal, and if they happen to jerk the fisherman from his seat,

the infuriate monster is said to dash at once at him. Many accidents, I learn, arise in this manner, but if they succeed in getting him quickly alongside they soon despatch him by a few blows on the snout. After the fish is brought to the shore it is either dried or salted, and that portion not required for their own consumption is conveyed into the interior and exchanged for dates and cloth. In the cool season the pastoral Arabs of this tribe reside, for the sake of more plentiful herbage, at or near the sea-coast, living, as those I have already noticed, in small tents, constructed with poles and covered with skins; but, upon the approach of the south-west monsoon, they retreat to the hills, and become regular Troglodytes. They then occupy, with their flocks, the most secluded valleys, where the pasturage is usually better than on the plains. The whole of this tribe are in bad repute with their neighbours, and it is said that they make no scruple of plundering boats which may be unfortunate enough to fall into their clutches. It was the Beni Geneba that approached the American sloop Peacock, when aground near

Mazura, in 1835, with the intention, it was supposed, of plundering her: this intention, however, they stoutly deny. Milk, dates, and fish form their principal food, and, as the water is indifferent, they drink large quantities of the former. Their dates are obtained principally from the extensive groves at Ḅení-Abú-'Alí, with the people of which they are intimately connected by the ties of blood.

Their country boasts a very salubrious climate. Invalids from Maskat frequently reside here for two or three months, partaking of the simple food of its inhabitants, and they are said, even in the most obstinate cases, to derive great benefit from it. As to their modes of punishment, for stealing a camel, sheep, &c., provided it is the first offence, simple restitution only, is insisted on; for the second, they impose a fine; and for the third, the offender is manacled and imprisoned. Fines are also inflicted for abusive language: murder or manslaughter, as with other tribes, is revenged on the offender by the relations of the deceased.

Tuesday, December 8th. At ten, A.M., we

decamped to return to Benî-Abú-'Alî by another route, more to the westward. Very much did I regret being compelled to do so, since I might, with my present escort, without the slightest fear of interruption, have proceeded to the confines of the Mahara Bedowins; but Omán, "metal more attractive," was before me. Until 1·30, the face of the country continued the same as I have before described it, but afterwards we crossed some arid plains, exhibiting neither trees nor bushes, and displaying alternately either a pebbly surface, or extensive saline incrustations. At sunset we halted for a short time to feed the camels, and then, as the night was fine, resumed our journey. At 12·45, after a long ride, at a hard pace, of fourteen hours, we arrived at a small Bedowin encampment, where we put up for the night. What an enviable attainment is that of being able to sleep on a camel! By the time I reached our halting-place I was fairly tired out, but, with the exception of the Sheïkh, who rode alongside of, and was chatting with me, every other individual of the party had fallen into a sound slumber.

December 9th. Early this morning we again set forward, and, after a pleasant ride, at a good round pace, arrived at Beni-Abú-'Alí. I found the greater number of the tribe assembled around the tent, and, upon inquiry, discovered that some Bedowins of the neighbouring tribe, of Beni-'Abú-Hasan, had approached during the night, and purloined a goat which had been sent by the Sheïkh of Kamil the day before as a present for me. My servants having made the head man of the tribe acquainted with it, they were waiting my arrival to retaliate upon the plunderers by seizing some of their cattle, and it was not without difficulty that I dissuaded them from this intention. Among these warlike tribes the most trifling incident is sufficient to set them by the ears, and I am told scarcely a year passes that the Imám is not compelled to send some influential individual to adjust their broils.

CHAPTER VII.

Departure — Hospitable Invitation — Copious Dews — Dreary Prospect—Inroads of the Sand—How arrested—Scarcity of Water—Melancholy fate of a Bedowin Family—Wádi Bethà—Abundance of Water in Omán — Water Skins — Anecdote—Bedi'ah—Its low situation — Subterraneous Watercourses—Magnificent Trees—Abundance and Excellence of the Fruit—Amazing Fertility—Accident—Medical Patients—Anecdote—Encamp at Ibrah — Presents — Description of the Town—Market—Inquisitiveness of Bedowin Ladies—An alarm.

Thursday, December 10*th.* I quitted Beni-Abú-'Alí this morning shortly before noon. The old men begged I would come again, and pass a month with them, in which case they promised to build a house "like those in India," and keep me in great state. The ladies were equally pressing in their entreaties, and the whole tribe accompanied me to the skirts of the village of Beni-'Abú-Hasan. "If you will visit us next year," said young Sooltan, "my father will have returned

from Mecca, and I will accompany you with a party of our own and the Geneba Bedowins as far as the limits of the Maharas." This I promised, if circumstances permitted, and, after shaking hands with all present, which they had learnt was our custom, we parted with mutual expressions of regret. I cannot forget the unaffected kindness which I experienced from this simple people, and shall ever recal the week spent with them and their neighbours as the most agreeable in my travels.

At 1·30 we passed the extremity of the Benî-'Abû-Hasan village. There are very few houses either here or at Benî-Abû-'Alî, and those few are small and rudely constructed. The natives occupy huts of various forms, built of the branches of the date palm. We now entered a shallow valley, called Wádî Bethà, with large goff (*Acacia Arabica*), and sumr trees (*Acacia Vera*), on either hand; from the latter the gum Arabic is produced. Neibik trees (*Lotus Neba*) in the bed of the valley are also numerous. A Bedowin hut occasionally peeps forth from beneath the trees, and some few cattle are

browsing on the grass which grows beneath them.

At 4·30, we passed Kamil, and at seven halted for the night amidst some sand downs about fifty feet in height. The night was clear, and the atmosphere of such uncommon purity that, not even in Egypt, do the stars shine forth with greater brilliancy. This I observed to be generally the case in extensive sandy tracts. But why are the dews so heavy, and the nights so cool on the Desert? The former are often so copious that they leave on the ground all the effects of a smart shower; and however torrid and parching may be the heat of the day, yet it is always succeeded by cool, and even cold nights.

Friday, December 11th. I rose this morning at an early hour, and scrambled to the summit of one of the highest of the sand hills, in order to obtain a view of the surrounding country. In the bleak and desolate expanse before me I discerned, as far as the eye could reach, nothing but hillocks of sand, rolled in from the Desert like the waves of the sea, until

their course had been arrested by the barrier on which I stood. Upon inquiry I could not learn that this was progressing, and my own observation induced me to think it was not, for, upon examination, I found that the hillocks which formed such an impediment to their encroachments, were covered with rak* and other Desert bushes, the roots of which sink deep into the sand, and there become matted, producing the same effects as the bent star in England. A single bush, from this peculiarity, arrests the progress of the sand, and collects it into a mound: other bushes spring forth on its surface, and they thus continue receiving alternately separate layers of sand and increased vegetation, until they attain considerable magnitude. Was it not for this happy provision, a flood of sand must long ago have overwhelmed the country to the very base of the seaward range of mountains. As there is but little water beyond this barrier, the wells being many days apart, the Bedowins rarely venture to cross

* *Cissus Arborea* of Forskal. The smaller branches of this tree are used in Arabia for tooth brushes. It was held in such high estimation among the ancient Arabs and Egyptians as to be celebrated by their poets.

it, for the hillocks are said to alter their outline, and even shift their position with every strong breeze that blows: they consequently lose their marks, and very distressing accidents frequently occur. Last night, Hamed related to me that when a young man, he, his father, and about twenty of their tribe, encountered near this spot a party of Wahhábís, by whom they were defeated, and compelled to fly with their wives, who accompanied them. Several of their tribe had occasionally crossed the Desert to some wells about three days' journey from the barrier, in the vicinity of which there was water and good pasturage. Here it was their intention to have remained until the hostile party had passed on, and left the road open for their return. But on the second day they were overtaken by a strong gale from the westward, which obliterated every trace of the path, and so filled the air with dust that they were unable to discern objects beyond a few yards. In this emergency they crowded together near a tree, where they had no alternative but to remain until there should be a change for the better: but the

gale continued unabated for three days. On the third day from their leaving the barrier, (their small stock of water being consumed on the first,) they killed the only two of their camels which could be spared, but the quantity thus obtained was soon exhausted amidst so many; and on the fifth morning two of their females and a young man, Hamed's brother, died. On the sixth day they reached the wells, but their horror may be conceived when they found them filled nearly to the surface with sand *. "We

* The supply of water is so plentiful in Omán, that we seldom had occasion to carry it with us; when we did, it was placed in skins called girbars, and all the hides of the sheep or goats killed during our journey were kept for this purpose: those of kids or lambs serve for milk, while the larger are used for either wine or water. They are tanned with the bark of the acacia, and the hairy part, which is left without, is generally, though not invariably, cleansed. The apertures through which the legs protruded are closed up, and the fluid within is discharged through the opening of the neck, which is gathered together, and fastened by means of a leathern thong, its extremity being cut in the form of a tongue or spout. They are slung alongside their camels, and a Bedowin when thirsty may frequently be observed drinking from them whilst in that position. They answer better than jars, because if the camel run against trees or his fellow beasts in the caravan, they are not liable to be broken, and from the evaporation constantly going on, the water is also kept perfectly cool, but whilst new, sufficient attention is not paid to cleansing them, and their contents thus acquire a loathsome taste and smell. A disagree-

knew of no other," said Hamed, "nëarer than three days, but, being then too weak to proceed further, we quietly laid ourselves down to die. I recollect nothing after that night, until I found myself lashed on a camel, and my father alongside of me driving it. From him I learnt that we were discovered on the following morning by another party of our own tribe, who had just filled their skins at a well not half a mile from us, and that we were now on our way with them to our own hamlet."

At seven hours we left our encampment, and resumed our journey along Wádí Bethà, which still continues shallow, exhibiting on its surface a few dwarfish bushes. At ten hours we passed a halting place called Roocsat, where there is water, and from thence crossed over a plain and desert country, the face of which is furrowed by nume-

able appearance is also imparted to the water from grease, with which the Arabs lubricate the inner side to prevent it from oozing through. How immutable are Eastern customs! These are the bottles so frequently alluded to in the Scriptural narrative; and in the *Antiquities of Herculaneum*, vol. vii. p. 197, will be seen the representation of a female pouring wine into a vessel from a skin precisely similar to what I have here described.

rous shallow ravines. When rain falls on the mountains these serve as channels to feed the main stream, which flows along the bed of the valley with much impetuosity, and finally discharges itself into the sea at Ras Mazura. As the chain where they originate is, however, of primitive formation, and the country through which they subsequently pass of an arid and sandy description, they bring no fertilising principle: yet the water, filtering through the channel during their brief course, affords, by means of wells, a plentiful supply at other seasons of the year.

At four, P.M., we halted at the frontier village of the Bedí'ah district. From Beni-Abú-'Alí to this point I count sixteen hours slow travelling, or forty-two miles; and, as the road winds very little, this may be considered the correct distance, as I found from its agreeing with the observations. The Arabs call all the portion of country from Beni-Abú-'Alí to this point, Jaïlán.

Bedí'ah is a collection of seven hamlets, situated in as many oases, each containing from two to three hundred houses. The súk, or market, is held on that which is the most

centrical. For their relative position I must refer the reader to the map, which, being originally constructed on a large scale, enabled me, as I proceeded, to fill up a description of the face of the country on it. One striking feature in the appearance of these towns is their low situation. They are erected in artificial hollows, which have been excavated to the depth of six or eight feet, and the soil thus removed is left in hillocks around their margins. These were the first oases I had hitherto met with, and my attention was consequently forcibly drawn to them. I found that these, and nearly all the towns in the interior of Omán, owe their fertility to the happy manner in which the inhabitants have availed themselves of a mode of conducting water to them, a mode, as far as I know, peculiar to this country, and at an expense of labour and skill more Chinese than Arabian. The greater part of the face of the country being destitute of running streams on the surface, the Arabs have sought in elevated places for springs or fountains beneath it; by what mode they discover these I know not; but it seems confined to a peculiar class of men,

who go about the country for the purpose; but I saw several which had been sunk to the depth of forty feet. A channel from this fountain-head is then, with a very slight descent, bored in the direction in which it is to be conveyed, leaving apertures at regular distances, to afford light and air to those who are occasionally sent to keep it clean. In this manner water is frequently conducted from a distance of six or eight miles, and an unlimited supply is thus obtained. These channels are usually about four feet broad, and two feet deep, and contain a clear rapid stream. Few of the large towns or oases but had four or five of these rivulets or feleji running into them. The isolated spots to which water is thus conveyed possess a söil so fertile, that nearly every grain, fruit, or vegetable, common to India, Arabia, or Persia, is produced almost spontaneously; and the tales of the oases will be no longer regarded as an exaggeration, since a single step conveys the traveller from the glare and sand of the Desert, into a fertile tract, watered by a hundred rills, teeming with the most luxu-

riant vegetation, and embowered by lofty and stately trees whose umbrageous foliage the fiercest rays of a noontide sun cannot penetrate. The almond, fig, and walnut trees are of enormous size, and the fruit clusters so thickly on the orange and lime trees, that I do not believe a tenth part can be gathered. Above all, towers the date-palm, adding its shade to the sombre picture. Some idea may be formed of the density of this shade by the effect it produces in lessening the terrestrial radiation. A Fahrenheit's thermometer, which within the house stood at 55°, six inches from the ground, fell to 45°. From this cause, and an abundance of water, they are always saturated with damp, and even in the heat of the day possess a clammy coldness. Such spots present, indeed, a singular and peculiar scene, unequalled perhaps in any part of the world. Of this, nothing can furnish a more striking idea than the list of their productions, all of which are frequently reared in a plot of ground not more than three hundred yards in diameter; and I am confident no equal space, in any part of the world, will

afford a catalogue more numerous and varied, more luxuriant in growth, or more perfect in form.

Saturday, December 12th. The people here are less curious than might have been expected, considering it is doubtful if they have seen an European before. They pass with a single gaze, and then leave me to the undisturbed enjoyment of my pursuits. I discovered to-day, to my great mortification, that the jolting of the camels had rendered my chronometer useless, although it was packed with the utmost care. I am consequently obliged to have recourse to the occultation of the stars by the moon, as a means of obtaining the longitude. To a person who is stationary, this presents a very facile mode; but to the traveller, many circumstances constantly arise, which render the possibility of its adoption less frequent than could be wished. I found the latitude of the place by a meridional observation and the mean of several stars, to be 22° 27′; the variation by morning and evening observation, was 2·7 westerly.

Sunday, 13th. I had several applications made to me this evening for medicine. Fevers,

and ulcers on the legs, were the most prevalent complaints: both seem to arise from the cold and damp of their dwellings, which are erected in the neighbourhood of grounds continually saturated with moisture. At eight, A.M., we proceeded N.W. ¼ W., along Wádí Bethà, and passed several hamlets on either side the road. At nine hours forty-five, we arrived at the súk, or market. This place is celebrated for two defeats of the Wahhábís, one in 1811, when their force was under the direction of Abduliziz *, and the other a few months after my visit. On the former occasion, among others, there fell a chief named Sheïkh Mutlock, whose son, Seyyid Ibn Mutlock, then but a boy, was with him on the field. With much of that vindictive feeling which forms so prominent a feature in the character of the Arab, the young Sheïkh from that moment continued to cherish the most deadly hatred

* The genealogy of the Wahhábí chiefs is as follows:—Fasil, the present Imám, as he is now styled, Ibn Furkey, Ibn Abdallah, Ibn Mohammed, Ibn Saoud, Ibn Abduliziz, and Ibn Saaud, who, in 1747, became a proselyte of the reformer Abdoul Wahháb. Abduliziz here referred to is the individual who, in 1801, pillaged and burnt the town and magnificent mausoleum of Imám Hassein, and with ruthless barbarity butchered indiscriminately all the men, women, and children, that fell into his hands.

to the tribe, and when, this year, he was appointed to the command of the Wahhábí frontier force at Bireïmah; although the Wahhábís were at peace with the Imám, he suddenly marched with three thousand men direct to Bedi'ah. But the tribe he had destined to destruction, receiving intelligence of this movement two hours before he made his appearance, they collected eight hundred men, all who were then present, to oppose him. These were well armed, and the Sheïkh's threats that he would afford no quarter urged them to their best efforts. Notwithstanding their unequal numbers, they attacked the Wahhábís so unexpectedly, and with such fury, that they drove them from the field, and after slaying a great many, compelled the others to seek for safety in flight. The Sheïkh, almost maddened at his defeat, was foremost in every danger, and, but for the devotion of a few who hurried him from the field, he too would, on the same spot, have probably shared the fate of his father. After halting a short time at this village, waiting for our camels, we continued N.N.W. until twelve, when we arrived at Cawbil, which is walled round and has several forts.

The Sheïkh met me at one of the gates, and accompanied me on foot through the town; he appeared very anxious I should halt here, but I was desirous to push on to Ibrah. The tops of the houses and the windows were crowded with people assembled to see us. At one hour we passed Dereeza, and at 1·30, Moderak; both small oases with villages within them. At two hours, the country, which had hitherto presented a succession of plains, now alters its character. Low hills of limestone formation, about one hundred and fifty feet in height, intersect it. Jackals and hyenas occupy the numerous caverns which its surface presents. At 5·30, winding from N. N. W. to W. N. W., still along Wádí Bethá, we arrived at the town of Ibrah.

I pitched my tent in the dry bed of a torrent, within a few yards of the Date Grove. A clear and sparkling stream flowed around its margin, and on its banks were seated several females, who had been bathing, and were then, notwithstanding my approach, nearly in a state of nudity. Others were washing linen, or cleansing their bright cop-

per cooking-pots; and all laughed and chatted with much volubility. Halting immediately after, I received the usual offering of a sheep and several bowls of milk; but during the evening I was troubled with but few visitors.

Monday, 14*th*. Accompanied by old Saaf I visited the town, formerly a place of some note, but now greatly fallen to decay. The instant you step from the Desert within the Grove, a most sensible change of the atmosphere is experienced. The air feels cold and damp; the ground in every direction is saturated with moisture; and, from the density of the shade, the whole appears dark and gloomy. There are still some handsome houses at Ibrah; but the style of building is quite peculiar to this part of Arabia. To avoid the damp, and catch an occasional beam of the sun above the trees, they are usually very lofty. A parapet encircling the upper part is turreted; and on some of the largest houses guns are mounted. The windows and doors have the Saracenic arch, and every part of the building is profusely decorated with ornaments of stucco in bas relief, some in very good taste.

The doors are also cased with brass, and have rings and other massive ornaments of the same metal.

A daily market for the sale of grain, fruit, and vegetables is held here, to which the Bedowins and inhabitants of the neighbouring villages resort in considerable numbers. The stalls at which the venders take their stand are only occupied during the hours of business. They are small square buildings, surrounded by a low wall, roofed over, open in front, and have a floor raised about two feet from the level of the street. Adjoining to Ibrah, within about two hundred yards, there is another small town, but the inhabitants are at feud with each other, and a crowd which followed us from the former would not enter within the precincts of the latter. On the rugged and pinnacled heights in the vicinity of this and the neighbouring towns there are perched several round towers, which serve as strongholds in intestine feuds or against foreign invasion. In many of them there are wells, and they are usually sufficiently stored with provisions; so that in a country where artillery is seldom used, they

would be capable of holding out for a long time. Ibrah is justly renowned for the beauty and fairness of its females. Those we met in the streets evinced but little shyness, and on my return to the tent I found it filled with them. They were in high glee at all they saw; every box I had was turned over for their inspection, and whenever I attempted to remonstrate against their proceedings, they stopped my mouth with their hands. With such damsels there was nothing left but to laugh and look on. Saaf, a sober, staid personage, seated himself in a corner, where he remained silent, and, to appearance, perfectly horrified at the passing scene. On one occasion, however, their mischievous pranks got the better of his philosophy, and arming himself with a horsewhip, he would have dispersed the party by no very gentle means if I had not prevented him. Towards evening these good dames took their departure, and their place was filled with far less entertaining visitors—some senseless and bigoted old Moolahs, and a few rude and troublesome young men. I got rid of the former, who had come for the purpose of disputation, by subscribing to all

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they asserted, and Saaf's influence rid me of the latter.

After obtaining a meridian observation for the latitude, which I made 22·41, we left our encampment. In passing through the town a crowd of vagabonds (aided by all the children) rose up and fairly hooted us through it. A few stones were also thrown, one of which struck me on the arm. I then turned to a group of old men, and inquired if it were possible that this could be a town of Sayyid S'aid's? They made an attempt at interference; but it was very plainly to be perceived that they were rather pleased than dissatisfied at the riot. At last, feeling seriously apprehensive for my servants, who were following at some distance, I faced about to join them, and the inhabitants seeing I had firearms, and thinking I was about to use them, scampered off in all directions. We availed ourselves of this panic, and got through the gate, after which they did not attempt to follow us. It is disturbances of this nature which a traveller has most to fear, for a mob in an Eastern town, when once raised, quickly proceeds to acts of violence; but I must re-

mark, that this was the only part of the Imám's dominions where I was not received with the utmost attention, and it is not probable we should have been thus insulted had the Sheïkh himself been present.

CHAPTER VIII.

Mountain Scenery—Sagacity of the Camel—Climate of Omán—A Thief—Gum Arabic—Attachment to the Camel, laughable Anecdote—Lieutenant Whitelock—Breakfast with the Sheïkh of Semmed—Interior of his Fortress—Hospitality—Gravity of Bedowin youth—Anecdote—Sheïkh Nasser—Bedowin robbers—Anecdote—Minna—Beautiful Scenery—Honesty of the women—Neswah—Sheïkh—Visit to the Fort—Trade—Dress and habits of the Natives.

At 1·30, from an elevated ridge, I caught a glimpse of the mountains over Súr, bearing E. by ½ S. Our course here has been W. by S., and from hence it was N.W. Small hills of limestone formation, of a pyramidal form and rugged outline, their blackened surface exhibiting no traces of bushes or desert shrubs, extend on either hand. The intermediate valleys and plains are sprinkled with grassy knolls, and towards sunset we again entered a woody tract. Shortly after dark we lost the path: the camels, immediately this falls out, discover it instinctively, and then seem to be

possessed with a spirit of devilry. They erect their tails, run here and there, and against each other; and generally conclude, as they did with us this evening, by two or three scampering away and capsizing their baggage. After this I thought it better to halt, and our Bedowins having discovered a hollow, which they always select in preference to other spots, because sheltered from the wind and serving to conceal their fires, we collected our camels and unloaded them for the night. Fahrenheit's thermometer stood this evening at 56°, and we found a fire not only comfortable but necessary. The Bedowins have a singular mode of sleeping; they strip themselves of all their clothes, and having dug a hole in the sand, pile these, and whatever they can get in addition, over them; the sword, shield, and matchlock are placed by their side, and so disposed as to be ready for immediate use.

Although equally cool, the atmosphere is not so clear and pure as that which we have left. The air of Omán (I use this word in the restricted sense I have attached to it in the map) is considered to be proverbially unhealthy in the cold season; especially within the

oases. Bedowins from the Desert rarely reside there three or four days without being attacked with violent fevers, and my own sufferings subsequently, unfortunately verified the correctness of this opinion. The climate of Batna and Bedi'ah is said to be salubrious; but in this respect Nejd is considered superior to all Arabia. The approach of some Bedowins being this night discovered by the neighing of my horse, in an instant every individual was upon his feet with his matchlock ready. The party, which consisted of five or six, finding themselves discovered, were now stealing off, and I had some difficulty in preventing our party from firing on them. Having set a guard, we slept undisturbed until the following morning. To pilfer some article from the baggage was the object our visitors had in view, but at daylight we discovered nothing to be missing.

Tuesday, December 15th. At 7·45 we continued across the same woody track as before. The sumr trees (*Acacia vera*) here are of great size, and the gum exudes in considerable quantities. I was chatting with Hamed, who rode alongside of me, re-

specting his camels. He related many singular cases of the attachment which the Bedowins bear towards these useful animals. In order to draw further information from him I professed my incredulity on certain points which he had mentioned. A party at this moment happened to be approaching from an opposite direction, and Hamed, somewhat nettled, proposed to test the truth of his statements by what I should witness. The parties approached: "May God Almighty break the leg of your camel!" bawled out Hamed to the foremost of the party, who was riding somewhat in advance of the others. Without a moment's hesitation the stranger threw himself from his beast, and advanced sword in hand on Hamed, who would probably have had but little reason to congratulate himself on his experiment, if several of our party had not thrown themselves before him, and explained the story. But the Arab still appeared deeply offended, and replied to all that was brought forward in explanation by asking "Why he abused his camel, and in what manner it had harmed him?" The matter was adjusted by a few

presents, and I passed on, determined in my own mind not to trust again to an Arab's delicacy in settling a question of this nature.

At 9·45 we arrived at Wádí Ethelée, where there are some wells of good water. Antelopes, partridges, and other game are numerous. Here old Saaf and I were very successful, and when we left, the dogs had a famous course after an antelope, which they picked up in a run of ten minutes. At one hour we arrived at the S. E. extremity of the grove and town of Semmed, and at 1·30 pitched our tent alongside a beautiful stream of running water, a few yards from the trees.

Wednesday, 16*th*. Semmed is of greater extent than many of the other oases, but there are no more than four hundred inhabitants at present on the spot. This is the native city of my old guide and companion, Saaf, and I found, to my great regret, that he was to leave me here. In the evening I was joined, most unexpectedly, by Lieutenant Whitelock, who was travelling with leave of absence, in order to acquire a knowledge of Arabic. As it suited both our views, it was agreed that we should proceed together. He

has assumed the native dress, but I still retain that of England *.

Thursday, December 17th. We visited the Sheïkh's dwelling, on an invitation to breakfast. It was a large fort, very strongly built with the same material as the houses. The rooms are spacious and lofty, but destitute of any furniture. Suspended on pegs, protruding about two feet from the wall, are the saddles, cloths, and trappings of their horses and camels. The ceilings are painted in various devices, but the floors are of mud, and only partially covered with mats. The windows, in place of the usual ornamental wood-work, are crossed by transversed iron bars; and at night, in order to protect the inmates from the keenness of the winds, they are wholly closed by wooden shutters. Lamps formed of shells, a species of murex, are suspended by lines from the ceiling, and the whole was essentially different from what I have seen in other parts of Arabia. Our

* Lieutenant Whitelock's route from Maskat is laid down on the map. It led along a narrow road, through a wilderness of broken mountains. He passed a few spots where there were date plantations, but the country was generally barren, and destitute of water.

meal, after the usual style, was sumptuous and plentiful; but so strictly do the Arabs regard the laws of hospitality, that it required much entreaty to induce our host, a man of high birth, to seat himself with us. This originates in a prevalent belief that if he partakes of the meal he will neither have leisure nor opportunity to look after his guests, and he, therefore, insisted upon waiting on us in the capacity of an attendant. It was not until I told him that we would not commence unless he did so, that he could be prevailed on to join in, and then we perceived he could play his part as well as the best of us. On returning to the tent I found, as usual, a great crowd collected there, but they were kept in tolerable order by a little urchin about twelve years of age, whose father, a man of great influence in these parts, had, a few years before, been killed by the Bedowins. He had taken complete possession of our tent, and allowed none of his countrymen to enter but with his permission. He carried a sword longer than himself, and also a stick, with which he occasionally laid about him. I was excessively amused at the

gravity and self-importance of this youngster, who appeared perfectly well acquainted with the numbers, resources, and distribution of the native tribes, and his conversation on these and other subjects was free and unembarrassed, and, at the same time, highly entertaining. It may be observed, generally, of the Arabs, and particularly of the Bedowins, that their boys share the confidence and the councils of the men at a very early age; and on several other occasions I have seen their youths exert their influence in a manner that to us would appear preposterous. But it is a part of their system of education to cease treating them as children at a very early period, and they acquire, therefore, the gravity and demeanour of men at an age when our youth are yet following frivolous pursuits, and being birched into propriety of conduct and manners.

I amused the whole assembled party this evening with Bruce's experiment of firing a candle through two parts of an inch deal plank. When I proposed it they declared the thing impossible, and in this opinion they were stanchly supported by our young

friend; but we may pardont heir unbelief, as well as surprise, after the feat was performed, when we reflect that it was not many years since in "all enlightened England" that the possibility of the act was very gravely questioned, and Bruce's narration of a similar exploit very charitably attributed to his "love of the marvellous."

Saturday, 19*th*. We struck the tent, and, after I had obtained a latitude, left at one, P.M., accompanied by the Sheïkh and a guard of about twenty men, mounted on asses. Continuing our course along the valley, in forty minutes we arrived at Omaseer, where there is a fort and a few houses.

At three hours we came to a pass called Urif, which has a descent down a narrow ravine of about two hundred feet. The rock here contains an astonishing quantity of iron pyrites, the glistening of which is perceived from a considerable distance.

At four hours we passed a town called Gaza, bearing S. S. W., and at 5·45 arrived at Kothra, where we halted. Two miles from this, in a S. S. E. direction, there are some copper mines, but our guides would not conduct us to them.

They are still worked, but the quantity of ore obtained is very small, and scarcely covers the expense. Kothrá is a small hamlet with an abundance of water in its vicinity: the night was cloudy, with light drizzling rain; but within our tent we passed the time very pleasantly, chatting with Sheïkh Nasser and his Bedowins to a very late hour.

Sunday, December 20th. Having taken leave of Sheïkh Nasser, who is the most intelligent Arab I have yet met with, at 11·30 we continued our journey, with a guard of about seventy men, for the road between this place and Neswah is said to be infested with robbers, who plunder small parties in open day. Our course was W. ½ N., and we passed a great number of villages, which appear on our map. At 2·20, we halted 45 minutes at Okahil, in order to obtain a fresh guard; the men collected for this purpose were apparently volunteers, who seemed to enjoy the fun a good deal, although in some places they proceeded with their matches lighted, and under every preparation for an attack. The robbers who frequent the Jaïlan district arrive from the Western Desert in parties of

fifty to one hundred, being generally mounted on swift camels. No warning is of course given of their approach; and after a foray they retreat with equal celerity. They often possess themselves of the African slaves belonging to the town Arabs, which they bring up in the same habits as themselves, and not unfrequently marry their daughters to them. Life is seldom taken in these affrays; though I saw a great number of people suffering from sword and gun-shot wounds; the latter, it occurs to me, are not unfrequently occasioned by their own or their friends' carelessness. Every body on a journey carries a match lighted, and no more care is taken of their matchlock then, than when unloaded; so that, when these men clustered round upon our approach to any suspicious spot, I always thought there was more reason to dread danger from my friends than foes. At 4·25 we arrived at Tulhat, where there are two small forts erected on the pinnacles of a hill rising over the town. The town itself is walled round; the date groves in its vicinity are very extensive, and a noble stream of water passes through it. Hitherto I have avoided sleeping in these

groves, but here we were compelled to do so, and the consequence was what I anticipated, two of my servants being next day attacked with severe fever. Fahrenheit's thermometer 58°.

Monday, 21*st*. We started at ten, and at twelve, crossing a desert country, passed a town at the base of the Green Mountains, called Birket el Moge, bearing north, and distant about eight miles. At 12·30, we arrived at Mayul, on the south side of which there are two round forts; and at 1·30 we entered the precincts of the town of Minnà.

Minnà differs from the other towns in having its cultivation in the open fields. As we crossed these, with lofty almond, citron, and orange-trees, yielding a delicious fragrance on either hand, exclamations of astonishment and admiration burst from us. "Is this Arabia," we said; "this the country we have looked on heretofore as a desert?" Verdant fields of grain and sugar-cane stretching along for miles are before us; streams of water flowing in all directions, intersect our path; and the happy and contented appearance of the peasants, agreeably helps to fill up the smiling

picture; the atmosphere was delightfully clear and pure; and, as we trotted joyously along, giving or returning the salutation of peace or welcome, I could almost fancy we had at last reached that "Araby the blessed," which I have been accustomed to regard as existing only in the fictions of our poets.

Upon entering the town, I was met by some relations of Sayyid S'aid, who conducted me to an open spot, where we pitched our tent. These chiefs are at feud with the neighbouring tribe of Ghafari, who possess an extensive fort contiguous to the town, and do not acknowledge the authority of the Imám.

The Ghafari are among the noblest of the tribes of Omán, and, with the Y'harabi, have at different periods respectively furnished an Imám. Their power is now limited to the possession of a few castles, from which they occasionally sally and annoy the surrounding country. The Sheïkh of Minnà informed me that, wearied with the constant broils which his unruly neighbours thrust on him, he, a short time before, had undermined their fort, which was but a few yards beyond the walls of his town, and that upon any return of dis-

turbance, he would destroy the whole nest of them. I should have been incredulous to the truth of a statement so entirely at variance with their usual mode of warfare, if, on condition that I would instruct them how to lay and fire the train, which they were afraid of doing themselves, he had not offered to conduct me to the spot; but, of course, I declined any interference.

Minnà is an old town, said to have been erected at the period of Nushirvan's invasion; but it bears, in common with the others, no indications of antiquity: its houses are lofty, but do not differ from those I have described at Semmed and Ibrah. There are two square towers, about one hundred and seventy feet in height, nearly in the centre of the town; at their bases, the breadth of the wall is not more than two feet, and neither side exceeds in length eight yards. It is therefore astonishing, considering the rudeness of the materials, (they have nothing but unhewn stones and a coarse, but apparently strong cement,) that, with proportions so meagre, they should have been able to carry them to the elevation they have. The guards, who are constantly

on the look-out, ascend by means of a rude ladder, formed by placing bars of wood in a diagonal direction in one of the side angles, within the interior of the building. The country in every direction around this town is flat and even; and the commanding view they obtain from their summit enables them to perceive from a long distance the approach of an enemy. A telescope which I presented to the Sheïkh was most thankfully received, and it promises to be of every service to them.

The females here are equally bold, and more numerous than those of Ibrah. Yet, notwithstanding my tent was constantly crowded with them, and a temptation to pilfer must have been presented in a hundred seducing and facile forms, I did not miss the most trifling article. I hope their other virtues may be commensurate with their honesty. More frolicsome, laughter-loving dames I never beheld: they were never for an instant quiet, and, as for their chattering!—he must be a bold man, and worthy of his destiny with such damsels, who, availing himself, in point of plurality, to the

full extent of Mohammed's permission, finds no reason to repent having done so.

Tuesday 22*nd*. At 9·40 we left the skirts of the town, and, continuing north, over much cultivated ground, at length arrived at the base of a low ridge of hills, which forms the roots of the Jebel Akhdar range. At 10·30 we continued rounding a cape of the hills, and at 1·30, arriving at the small fort and villages of Rhodda and Furk, we crossed over much marshy ground, filled with the high reeds of which the Arabian pens are made; and at 3·30 reached Neswah. I proceeded at once to the residence of the Sheïkh, who possesses great influence in these parts. We found him seated before the castle gate, with an armed guard of about fifty men, who were standing on either side. The whole town had followed us thus far; but directly Sayyid S'aid's letter was produced, and it was discovered who we were, they immediately dispersed, and the Sheïkh expressed his regret that I had not sent him an intimation of my intended visit, in order that he might have met me on the road with a proper escort. We accompanied him to

his audience-room, within the fort, which was lofty and well furnished. A house was soon procured, and here, for the first time since leaving Maskat, I enjoyed the luxury of being alone, and remaining with our every motion unwatched, for, at the different other towns on our route, the Sheïkhs and principal men thought they honoured us in proportion to the time they passed in our society. During the evening, the Sheïkh, accompanied by a few of his friends, paid us a visit. To my surprise the latter applied to us for brandy, and drank as much as was given them without scruple; nor did the Sheïkh express any disapprobation of such an indulgence. I found they had been in the habit of procuring spirits from Maskat, where, though they are contraband, a considerable quantity is smuggled on shore from the Indian ships. When they first made their appearance there was a Moolah with them, but he took his departure very soon, in consequence of some fumes of tobacco passing over his person.

We spent the day in looking over the town and the surrounding gardens, and to-

wards evening went to visit the fort, which, in the estimation of all the surrounding country, is impregnable. We were admitted, after much ceremony, by an iron door of great strength, and, ascending by a vaulted passage, passed through six others equally massive before we reached the summit. In order to render appearances more imposing, a janitor behind each inquired the purport of our visit; and, being told we were servants of the Sooltan, he removed several locked bars and chains, and we then passed on. The form of the fort is circular, its diameter being nearly one hundred yards, and to the height of about ninety feet it has been filled up by a solid mass of earth and stones: seven or eight wells have been bored through this, from several of which they obtain a plentiful supply of water, and those which are dry serve as magazines for their shot and ammunition.

We found a few old guns here, one bearing the name of Imám Saaf, and another that of Kouli Khan, the Persian general who took Maskat. A wall forty feet high surrounds the summit, making the whole height of the

tower one hundred and fifty feet. It is certainly a work of extraordinary labour, and, from its appearance, most probably of considerable antiquity; but, on this point, I could gain no certain intelligence. The natives have not overrated its strength; neither artillery nor shells could make much impression: it would be too high to scale, even if the upper wall was breached; and the only practicable way which I can conceive, would be either starving out the garrison, or mining it. Even the latter operation would be tedious.

The dry bed of an extensive stream passes its base. Within this several houses have been erected, but, about three years ago, after some heavy falls of rain on the mountains, it filled its bed so suddenly that the whole of these, as well as a considerable part of the town, were washed away. It had not been known to rise to such a height for thirty years before.

Neswah in extent resembles Minnà, but the groves are more numerous. A great quantity of sugar-cane is grown, and its produce manufactured here by a process similar

to that adopted in India, from whence they appear at a very late period to have borrowed it, as none was made at Maskat in 1760, when Niebuhr visited it. The best ulwah in Arabia is obtained at this town. They also make a few copper pots, and there are some workers in gold and silver, but not having many artisans of any description, all their other manufactured commodities arrive from Maskat. I must not, however, omit to mention that a considerable quantity of cloth and some good mats are fabricated from the rushes which grow on the borders of the streams. Preparing cotton in the yarn is the principal occupation of the females. In the cool season they may be perceived coming out from beneath the groves with their spindles after breakfast, to enjoy the warmth of the sun's rays. The men alone attend the looms. Besides mats the females manufacture some pretty baskets from the rushes. The former serve them to sleep on, and the latter they carry with them to market to deposit their purchases in. A great many camolines are fabricated here, and also brought from Nejd. The best,

worn by the Sheïkhs are of a light-brown, or cream colour, and sell for forty or fifty dollars; the black camoline, and those striped in alternate vertical bars of brown and white, eight or ten dollars. The camoline forms the most important article of their dress, and its quality denotes the condition and rank of the wearer.

CHAPTER IX.

Revenue of Neswah—Currency—Author lodges in a Mosque—Tanúf—Mountain Scenery—Perilous Descent—Seyk—Amiable character of its Inhabitants—Romantic Landscape—Hodin—Pomegranate Wine—Shirazi—A Termagant—Bedowin Curiosity—Country of the Franks—Description of Shirazi—Excursions—The Almond—Figs, &c.—Altitude of the Mountains—Wild Animals.

NESWAH is the only town in Omán from whence the Imám derives any revenue, and even here it is scarcely more than nominal, for not more than one thousand dollars a year are remitted to him. The following are the coins in current use amidst the towns in the interior. They were nearly all coined during the reign of Imám Saaf, and differ from those now in use at Maskat and on the sea coast. All have inscriptions, but nothing bearing a likeness to any object in animated nature.

New coinage at Muskat.

20 copper coins make a gazi.	Spanish dollar 200 pice or gazi.
20 gazi a mahmidi.	A basi . . 40 „ „
15 mahmidi a dollar.	Mahmidi . 20 „ „
	Shuk or 5 „ „

The following were the principal articles exposed for sale, with their prices, both of which are nearly the same at all the other interior towns:

Rice	12 pice per lb.
Wheat	12 „ „
Barley	11 „ „
Beans	10 „ „
Camel's flesh . .	16 „ „
Beef	20 „ „
Mutton	16 „ „
Kid	14 „ „
Sweet oil . . .	50 „ „
Ghee	56 „ „

Friday, December 25th. At 11 A.M. we left the town on a visit to the celebrated Jebel Akhdar, or Green Mountains. Following the skirts of the hills to our left, we passed several steril plains which present nothing worthy of observation, and at three hours arrived at Tanúf, where the Sheïkh resides, whose authority is paramount on the mountains. After halting we were at first lodged in the mosque, which, strange as it may appear, is generally used in Omán as a caravansarai;

but fearing they might not relish our walking about with our shoes on, and it being rather too cool to go without them, I procured another house. Here I was soon joined by the Sheïkh, who came with several others to dissuade me from my intention of visiting the mountains. Most frightful pictures were drawn of the passes; and I believe they thought that we, like many of their worthy countrymen, who pass their lives on the plains, had never visited a mountain district. The natives were also described as being little better than savages, and especially hostile to the visits of strangers; but finding all their arguments ineffectual in changing our intention, they took their departure, evidently somewhat disappointed.

Tanúf has two small forts, which serve to command the entrance of the valley; in other respects it is an insignificant hamlet, surrounded by considerable cultivation.

Saturday, December 26th. In the early part of the day, every obstacle on the part of the Sheïkh and the inhabitants was thrown in the way of our proceeding, and matters were at length only settled by my threatening to ride

back to Neswah, and bring the Sheïkh with me. After we had fairly started, a few dollars to those who were to accompany us acted like magic in removing objections, and at 1·30 we commenced our ascent, about a mile from the village. The mountain asses with which we were furnished are of a large size; and by constantly traversing these acclivities, acquire a firmness of step equal to that of mules. They proceed at a very quick pace for about sixty or eighty yards, and then halt to obtain breath and push on again. At this rate we ascended very rapidly along the southern ridge, in some places approaching to within a few paces of a ravine, which sunk down perpendicularly to a tremendous depth. On our left, in one part, where the dangers of a smooth narrow track were further increased by a slight slope towards the precipice, our off feet were swinging over it, and I then became conscious that the representations we had received from the natives below were not so much exaggerated as we were at first inclined to believe. At two hours we quitted the ridge to ascend the face of the mountain, and our track then lay

over tabular masses of limestone, until 3·30, when we halted in a narrow ravine near some wells of water. Hitherto the hills are wholly destitute of trees or herbage. Some scanty tufts appear at intervals, but the ravines by which they are intersected, notwithstanding their rocky bed, nourish several lofty tarfa or tamarisk trees (*Hedysarum Alhaghi*)*.

The mountaineers who accompany us, appear neither social nor good-humoured. After dark I noticed five different fires; the Bedowins of a single party always club around one.

December 27th. At 5·30, the thermometer stood at 53°; but it was not until seven hours, when the sun had risen sufficiently high to warm them, that our guides would proceed. We then continued our ascent over the same country as yesterday. The bushes become more stunted and scarce as we proceed, and all other vegetation entirely disappears. At 9·30 we arrived at the summit of the ridge, and from thence obtained a good view of the general outlines of the hills which form the

* I could not learn that any manna is here procured from this tree, as in the vicinity of Mount Sinaï.

most elevated portion of the range. They present without deviation the usual character of the limestone formation, ascending with a steep slope at an angle of about 30° with the horizon, and terminating to the southward in mural precipices of great depth. Along the face of one of these our route continued for some distance; the path was a stair-like projection, jutting out from the face of the cliff, and overhung by threatening masses of rock, while below, it sunk perpendicularly to the depth of 700 or 800 feet. As this path was too narrow to admit of the asses proceeding with their baggage in the usual manner, what could not be packed on their backs was carried by the drivers.

We now commenced our descent by a path so steep and slippery, that we were compelled to take off our shoes; yet the asses proceeded at a quick pace without making a single false step. Shortly before this, one of the men separated himself from the party, and called on me to follow him. I did so, and after scrambling for some distance down the precipice, holding on by the branches and roots of the trees, we suddenly turned an angle of

the rock; and found that the track led along a narrow ledge for about two hundred yards. It appeared as smooth as glass, and in many places not more than a foot in breadth, with a steep precipice on either hand above and below. I know not whether he expected me to imitate his example in taking a shorter route, or if it was only to exhibit his own fearlessness and dexterity; but directly we opened upon the scene, he stopped, and inquiring, with a smile, if I would follow further, tripped carefully along, supporting himself by his hands in those places where the rock projected and compelled him to bend his body over the precipice, and in the course of a few minutes, was safely seated at the opposite extremity, beckoning and calling on me to proceed. But it was a feat beyond my performance, and I returned to accompany the others by the safer path.

At 2·30 we passed some straggling hamlets, of which the huts were constructed of loose stones, and at 3, arrived at the valley and town of Seyk. Hitherto since leaving Tanúf, we had not met with any individual; but the inhabitants now crowded out in great

numbers to welcome us as we passed along. Several entreated us to remain for the night at their village; but I was anxious to pass on to Shirází, which is described as being the most extensive and plentiful of all the valleys. Our reception there, however, led me subsequently to regret that I did not take advantage of the kind offer of these villagers; for a wilder, more romantic, or more singular spot than was now before us, can scarcely be imagined. By means of steps we descended the steep side of a narrow glen, about four hundred feet in depth, passing in our progress several houses perched on crags or other acclivities, their walls built up in some places so as to appear but a continuation of the precipice. These small, snug, compact-looking dwellings have been erected by the natives one above the other, so that their appearance from the bottom of the glen, hanging as it were in mid air, affords to the spectator a most novel and interesting picture. Here we found, amidst a great variety of fruits and trees, pomegranates, citrons, almonds, nutmegs, and walnuts, with coffee bushes and vines. In the summer, these together, must yield a delicious fra-

grance, and produce a picturesque, verdant, and beautiful landscape. It was now, however, winter, and the whole were denuded of their leaves, and had a cheerless appearance. Water flows in many places from the upper part of the hills, and is received at the lower in small reservoirs, from whence it is distributed over all the face of the country. It is however so cold, that although very thirsty from the length of our walk, we were not able to partake of more than a sparing draught. From the narrowness of this glen and the steepness of its sides, only the lower part of it receives the warmth of the sun's rays but for a short period during the day; and even at the time of our arrival, we found it so chilly that, after a short halt, we were very happy to continue our journey. Ascending therefore on the opposite side of the valley also by steps, and passing over much rugged and uneven ground, we crossed a level tract of country, overgrown with brambles and thistles, and at 4·30 arrived at a small town called Hodin, where we found the cultivation on the open plains. The gardens and fields of grain in these spots, present a strong and pleasing

contrast to the bleak and barren appearance of the general surface of the range. Water seems plentiful; and some of the fruit-trees are very large. The natives make incisions in several of the pomegranate fruit, which cluster together on the same branch, and place under them large calabashes, into which the juice for some time continues to flow. It is afterwards mixed with that of the grape, for making wine.

After descending another pass of about seven hundred feet, we arrived at a third town called Shirází. But the ground in its neighbourhood was so uneven and rugged, that we found no place where our small tent could be pitched; and as the nights at this elevation are excessively cold, I was very desirous to obtain the shelter of a house. After being led from one to the other, the inmates of all refusing to admit us, on the plea of having no room, we were at length shown into a low, confined, filthy apartment, and our baggage lodged with us. We had not been seated here very long, before an old woman made her appearance with a flock of sheep and goats, to whose tenement we now dis-

covered that the inhabitants, from a desire of amusing themselves with the wrath of its irascible owner, had conducted us. Nor were they disappointed; for the old lady no sooner caught a glimpse of the intruders than she raised such an outrageous clamour, that we were but too happy to effect a safe retreat. Although completely fagged (for we had been walking nearly the whole of the day), and somewhat displeased at our unceremonious ejection, still we had no sooner seated ourselves beneath a rock, which sheltered us in a measure from the keenness of the wind, and had lighted a good fire to cook our evening meal, than the whole affair appeared so amusing that we indulged a hearty laugh. Not so the Arab who accompanied us as a guide; with our situation it was very evident he had marvellous little sympathy, notwithstanding his professions to the contrary. But that a true believer, and a Sheïkh of fifty followers, should meet with so little consideration and hospitality, was beyond endurance; and dire and manifold, as he sat shivering in the cold, were the imprecations which he heaped on the heads of the "wine-bibbing Kafers."

How long he amused himself in this way, I know not; for after collecting all the clothes we had with us, and selecting the softest piece of ground we could discover, we were soon asleep.

Early this morning, the natives assembled to inquire how we had passed the night; and finding we made no complaint either of our lodgings or the keenness of the air, they applied to Ali for information, as to who we were, and from what country we came; but he was indignantly silent. It was evident that they expected we should suffer in an equal degree with those of the low lands who had visited them; their surprise, therefore, was very great when they next applied to my servant, a shrewd fellow, who spoke Arabic with considerable fluency, and learnt that we came from a climate far colder than their own; "where, instead of having ice and snow but a very few days in the year, as you have here, it is found for six months together." After listening to this explanation they went away for a short time, and prepared a small shed, which had formerly been used as a cow-house, for our reception; thither we were

conducted, and they then supplied us with a hearty meal of dates, milk, and dried fruits.

Shirází contains about two hundred small houses, built around the commencement or head of a valley, which extends thence in a south south-east direction to the plains below. They are small, square, solid-looking edifices, and built expressly to withstand the showers and tempests which in those regions occasionally sweep over them. Narrow loopholes in the walls serve as windows, and the door also is very diminutive. None of these edifices have more than one story; and although for warmth and culinary purposes they are compelled constantly to have a fire within them, there is no chimney, nor any outlet for the smoke except by the door or window. The inconvenience is not however so great as might be imagined, since they manufacture large quantities of charcoal, which is most commonly used, together with a kind of peat, procured from some morasses in the lower part of the valleys. Whether it is owing to any peculiarity in their mode of preparing the former, I know not, but I could never learn that any accidents arise from its use.

although the rooms in which it is constantly burnt are low and confined, and the doors and windows all closed at night.

The subsequent three days were passed by us in traversing the country in various directions, and I shall now give the result of our observations on the figure and general productions of the range. The Jebel Akhdar occupy from east to west, which is their greatest length, a distance of thirty miles. At right angles to this they are intersected by narrow deep valleys, along which, during the rainy season, on either side, the torrents descend, and lose themselves, either in the sandy soil which crosses the plains, or pour their waters into the ocean. The maximum breadth of the chain is fourteen miles, and the northern and southern declivities are very rapid. Taken generally, it will be seen by my narrative of our route, that the range by no means deserves the appellation it has received, "Green," for a great proportion of its surface is bare limestone rock, which presents in some places naked tabular masses, and in others, the shallow, earthy deposit lodged in the hollows is as poor as the worst

part of the plains; but the valleys with several hollows are extensively cultivated, and supply such an abundance of fruit, &c., that many writers have considered them as common to the whole range, and hence is derived its present appellation. The most important of these productions are the vines, which extend along the valley for miles. They are chiefly grown on terraced grounds, and entwine themselves around poles about six feet in height. They are abundantly watered by artificial rills, and the soil appears rich and fertile. Their fruit is of several kinds; wine being made principally from the white, while the large black grape is used for drying into raisins.

The Arabs consider the almond-tree to be a native of Omán. It attains a greater size here than in the plains below, and some were shown me from thirty to forty feet in height. We found both the sweet and bitter kinds; and while the latter are considered very appetising, the former enter largely into the composition of all their made dishes, whether of grain, sweetmeats, or animal food. They have also walnuts, figs, and nutmegs. The

last are smaller than those brought from the Eastern Islands, but in richness of flavour, are fully equal to them. The figs (*Ficus Carica* of Linnæus) taste sweet and pleasant, but are very small, being inferior both in size and flavour to those brought from Turkey. They are dried and sold in large quantities in all the towns. A small quantity of coffee is grown; but owing, in all probability, to the little care bestowed on its culture, it is considered to be of inferior quality to that brought from Yemen. In addition to these, all the fruits and grain common to the plains below, are produced in large quantities. Maskat and other ports on the sea-coast of Omán, together with Ras-el-Khaimah, Sharga, and many others on the southern shores of the Persian Gulf, receive their supplies from this range.

By a tried thermometer, I found that water boiled at Shirází at 200¾°, which gives an altitude of about six thousand one hundred and eighty-seven feet. This I ascertained by several other observations to be from eight hundred to one thousand feet below the level of the summit of the greater part of the

chain. After rain at this season, they have not unfrequently ice and snow, but the latter rarely remains on the ground longer than a few hours. As far as inquiries enabled me to judge, the climate in the summer season must be very temperate, the natives say, not warmer than in the plains below; and at present, the hot and parching winds, which are there of such frequent occurrence, seem wholly unknown here. I could not, therefore, but conclude this must be a delightful residence when everything was in bloom. Water, which gushes from numerous springs, never fails them. At Shirází they have a copious stream, which, after being led into a deep and capacious reservoir, in sufficient quantities to irrigate the whole of the cultivated part of the valley, flows down in a yet considerable body, and supplies the small village of Birket el Moge at its extremity.

In some of the valleys on the south-east side of the range, where brambles and dense thickets are very numerous, wild boars, foxes, and hyenas are said to abound. The two latter we saw, but were never sufficiently fortunate to obtain a glimpse of the former.

CHAPTER X.

The Beni Riyám—Use of Wine—Description—Arms—Manners—Author's disappointment—Women—Return to Neswah—Desertion of the Guides—Ruined Town—Mountain Pass—Magnificent Precipice—Perilous Descent—Anecdote—Geological Structure—Birket el Moge—Salubrious Climate—Bedowin Chief—Anecdote—Love of the Desert—Cheerful temperament of the Bedowin—Robber Hordes—Domestic Manners and Customs—Contradictions of Character—Games—Talismans—Necromancy—Story-tellers.

THE Beni Riyám, who inhabit this range of mountains, occupied the principal share of my attention during our stay. I think there is every reason to believe their own assertion that they have never known a master, and, as they never venture below but in small parties, for the purpose of disposing of their various articles of merchandise, and do not proceed beyond the foot of the mountains, where regular markets are established, they may be still regarded as an isolated race, re-

moved from, and unconnected with, the several tribes in the plains below. The steep, rugged, and dangerous nature of their passes, which frequently lead through defiles, where a few resolute men might make the way good against a thousand, and also the strong positions which they have chosen for the erection of their villages, are alone sufficient to secure their independence.

Their number does not amount to more than a thousand souls, and a consciousness of this numerical weakness has made them aware that a strong bond of union is necessary to their preservation. They boast, therefore, that, while the low country has, at different periods, suffered from foreign invasion, or been involved in the anarchy and confusion consequent to intestine broils, they have cultivated their vines and grain in peace, without fear or interruption; and, although they bear the reputation of being affluent, yet the Imáms have never been able to exact a duty from them. In their persons, although more athletic and robust than their neighbours of the plains, they have not the usual healthy and hardy look of moun-

taineers, but, on the contrary, their faces are wrinkled and haggard, and appear as if suffering from premature decay. I have little doubt but this is owing to an immoderate use of wine, which they distil from their grapes in large quantities, and partake of openly and freely at their several meals. They defend the practice by asserting that the cold renders it necessary.

Their wine, in flavour and appearance, bears a close resemblance to that brought from Shiraz. Large quantities are taken in skins to the surrounding countries and to the sea-coast, and is there sold publicly. In the winter season the men leave the culture of their vines to the females, and, having nothing to do themselves, pass the time within their houses, until the sun is sufficiently high to warm them, and then they crawl forth and bask in it. While amidst their mountains, few go armed with more than the common jambeer or dagger, which also serves them on many occasions as a knife; but those who resort with their fruit, &c., to the plains below, carry with them their matchlock and sword, and that they well understand their

use, is but too frequently demonstrated in their brawls with their Arab customers, by whom they are considered an irascible, slothful, and immoral race.

"They neglect their prayers, break the fast of the Ramadan, and openly indulge in the forbidden pleasures of wine," was my friend, the Sheïkh's, summary of their character.

Wanting, at least in their estimation, the Bedowin virtues of frankness and hospitality, which at once convert the person they meet with into an open foe or a cherished guest, they have invested the inhabitants of Jebel Akhdar with the heaviest charge which can be brought against them, that of being niggard and sullen in the exercise of their hospitality: certainly what came under my observation during our short stay among them, produces little which could be advanced in contradiction of it. There was none of that freshness and vivacity which we usually meet with amongst mountaineers. Their manners, indeed, are far more rude than those of the wild tribes who inhabit the Desert below. They displayed no feeling of curiosity, nor

did they seek either to amuse, or evince any desire to be amused. I had, from the very first moment that these mountains were mentioned to me, permitted my imagination to dwell with delight on the rich treat which I anticipated their investigation would afford; I had, with a too simple belief in the exaggerated tales of the Arabs, pictured to myself a range of verdant hills, clothed with the richest vegetation, crowned with lofty forests, and peopled by a simple and interesting race, whose habits, usages, and condition would present an ample field of inquiry: the result of such expectations are before the reader.

Their women go unveiled, and the men appear by no means jealous. Whenever we fell in with them, they were either employed tending their vines, or in other occupations connected with husbandry, or were carrying water on their heads from the fountain, in the same manner, and in vessels similar to those used in India. Constant exercise in the open air gives an elasticity and freedom to their gait, as well as a ruddiness and clearness of complexion which we do not

meet with in the females below: these, combined with a disposition equally lively, and a form, although somewhat taller, yet possessing outlines by no means inferior, render them a far more interesting subject for consideration than their worthy helpmates. I have more than once regretted when in conversation with them, that, with such faces and forms, fate had not assigned them a less rude lot. Yet are they, in common with those who, from local and other causes, rank lower in the scale of human condition, apparently content with the station which has been assigned them, and we may question if any change would increase the sum of their general happiness.

Thursday, December 31*st.* It now became necessary for us to return to Neswah, where I expected letters connected with my further progress were awaiting me, but an unforeseen obstacle presented itself, which at first gave me no small trouble. The men we brought from Tarnúf complained much of the cold, and had been desirous to return immediately after our arrival at Shirází, and in this feeling they were supported and encouraged by

our Arab guide. Yesterday morning they grew more than usually importunate, but finding I paid little attention, they took advantage of our absence from the house, and threw everything out of the bags in which our baggage had been placed, breaking several of the articles, and then took their departure. We were consequently, on our return, left without any means of quitting, and being aware of the share the villagers had in the fracas, I was anxious to leave before they should be excited to any further mischief. I accordingly went this morning to the Sheïkh, who at first evinced no inclination to assist us, but after two hours' talking, (for the Arabs never perform the most trifling undertaking or engagement without an enormous expenditure of words,) he agreed, upon the promise of a present, not only to furnish us with asses, but also to accompany us himself to Birket el Moge. All was prepared by 8·30, and we then commenced our descent to Neswah by another road, called Durbh Moidien: its general direction being s. 13° E. it is unnecessary for me to detail the windings of our route.

Before us, there rose from the centre of the

valley a hill of a pyramidal form, on whose summit stood a ruined tower of large dimensions and massive architecture. This building is said, in latter years, to have served the purpose of a mosque; the date of its erection I could not ascertain, but tradition asserts that it was also frequented as a place of worship by their Pagan ancestors. However, if it be true that such, in either instance, was the purport to which it was applied, the mountaineers, considering the steepness and ruggedness of the path to the summit, must have been actuated by a more fervent spirit of religious zeal than they possess at present, if they ever troubled themselves with a single, instead of the requisite five daily visits to it.

Following the direction of the western brow of the valley, though sometimes this path led over several hills and much uneven ground to a considerable distance beyond it, and at others approached close to its verge, at 10·30 we arrived at the summit of a pass, and from thence obtained a full view of the wild and savage glen beneath. Vines and terraced grounds extended for three or four miles from Shirází, and below that, patches of cultivated ground

occur at intervals throughout its whole extent. There was also a chain of capacious pools of water, and the lively green of one, joined to the glistening of the other, continued to form a striking contrast with the sombre and shadowy line of the magnificent wall or sheet of rock, which rose perpendicularly on either hand. It took us until twelve, quick travelling, to reach the bottom of this pass. No consideration would have induced me to ride down, and I should have thought no human being in his senses would have attempted it; but our old guide, the Sheïkh, after accomplishing half the descent, was so fagged that, notwithstanding every remonstrance of ours, he mounted his ass, and thus safely accomplished the remainder of the pass. "Friend Seyyid," observed I, "if you make the attempt you will most assuredly break your neck." "It may be so," he replied, "but Allah Akbar (God is great), and I am tired."

The steps, formed of unhewn stones, about three feet in width, are ranged along a sloping ledge, jutting out from the face of an almost vertical precipice; and in those places where its width was found insufficient, the rock

has been scarped away. Considering these, together with many other difficulties which have been overcome with equal perseverance, it is impossible but to conclude that the mind which could have conceived and executed a work of such enormous labour, must, in a country like Arabia, where public works of any magnitude are almost unknown, have been of no common order. We are now on our descent through Wádí Moidien, which preserving the same name, extends from Shirází to Birket el Moge. In no part we are traversing does its breadth exceed one hundred paces; and the hills, which rise perpendicularly in some places, were overhung to the height of from 2000 to 3000 feet. It consequently resembles an enormous clift, and we have a good opportunity of investigating the geological structure of the range. The whole appears to consist of—1. Alpine limestone; 2. Old red sandstone, with an occasional micacious vein; 3. Alternately mica slate and granite.

Large masses have been splintered from the sides of these, blocking up the bed of the valley, and compelling us to wind our way

over or between them. A large stream of water traverses the centre; small hamlets, date groves, and patches of cultivated ground occur occasionally, until we arrived, at five hours, at the village of Birket el Moge, situated at the gorge of the pass, where it opens out into the plain.

As we here partook of our evening meal, we could not but congratulate ourselves upon our return from a journey, which the reiterated assurance of the Arabs to whom we mentioned it, would have led us to believe could only be performed with much labour and considerable peril. Birka, or Birket el Moge, has a fort, with a very capacious and good-looking castle, belonging to the Sheïkh of Suik, within its walls. Around these are several large groves and plantations; the plantain trees are numerous, and hence its name. A very large rivulet, or feletch, furnishes an ample supply of water, and from its situation, Birket enjoys a delightfully cool atmosphere from the Jebel Akhdar, and bears the reputation of being very salubrious.

January 1st. Having remunerated the Sheïkh with the promised present, at which

he was well pleased, we procured a fresh supply of asses, and set out for Neswah. Shortly after leaving, we were met by the Sheïkh of that place, with a guard of fifty men, mounted on camels. Although somewhat more haughty in his manners to those around him, and more showy than other chiefs in his dress, while within the town, yet here, in common with his followers, he had nothing more than a plain turban on his head, and a cloth around his waist: the reason he gave for this, when I inquired of him, was, that if an individual were to dress himself out more conspicuously than the rest, he would at once be selected by the Bedowin marksmen as the leader, and would most probably be the first to fall. This was very plausible; but I am induced to refer the custom of stripping themselves when on the Desert to another cause. Those cooped up in the towns and oases, which are interspersed throughout the Desert, lose, in consequence of their frequent journeyings from one to the other, but little of a Bedowin's real attachment for a residence on, or a journey across it, and they appear beyond measure delighted when any

event renders it necessary for them to do so. Their actions, as I have often witnessed on these occasions, are all directed to assimilating their party as nearly as possible in dress and manners to the Bedowins. The change in point of appearance, from the staid, sober demeanour of a resident Arab, to all the buoyancy, laughter, and wild freaks of the former, is most amusing.

Seeing our party so well mounted, I could not help inquiring of the Sheïkh his reason for not adopting some active measures for putting down the robber hordes which infest this district. "Our camels are, as you observe, very fine animals," said Abin Arish, "and I have no reason to doubt the courage of my followers; but the robbers approach in parties of thirty or forty, bringing with them several led camels, on which, frequently before any force can be raised to oppose them, the plunder is placed, and they are away in full retreat to their Desert. Thither, from our total unacquaintance with their haunts, we are unable to follow, and moreover, whenever we do give chase, it is soon found that our camels are no match in point of fleetness

to theirs; but with a troop of thirty horse, I would engage in six months to insure the safe passage of gold through any part of the adjoining country."

During my progress in this country, with a view to initiate myself into their manners and domestic life, I mixed much with the Bedowins, frequently living and sleeping in their huts and tents. On all occasions I was received with kindness, and often with a degree of hospitality above, rather than below, the means of those who were called upon to exercise it. The medical character which I assumed proved then of much service to me, although, it must be acknowledged, that I was often teased for assistance where it was not required, or where it was wholly unavailing. The Arabs have singular ideas with respect to medicine,—medicine, in its most comprehensive sense, it certainly is to them,—since they look for no peculiar results from the use of one kind more than another, but will swallow with avidity all which is given them under that denomination. One morning I had thrown without the door, as wholly useless, some damaged papers of magnesia and rhubarb; but

the Arabs, who had seen me remove them from the small case I always carried with me, formed a different opinion, and, after an eager scramble, in which some of their females joined, they were collected and greedily devoured. In addition to human, I had not unfrequently other patients to prescribe for—horses, camels, asses, and sometimes cats. It is a mistake which Europeans, who have adopted this character, have fallen into, not to do so, for an Arab will never understand why, when you cheerfully attend a slave, whose loss he can supply for thirty or forty dollars, you should not do so to animals which are of greater value to them. It is all well enough with European ideas, to speak of the superiority of the human race over the brute species; but an Asiatic will not understand why, if you oblige him in one point, you should not do so in the other. My practice proved very extensive, and, if not travelling, the early part of the day was thus occupied. I always carried with me a large quantity of pills made of ambergris mixed with opium, and found, on account of the stimulating property which

the former is supposed to possess, that I could not, to an Arab, make a more acceptable present. Towards noon I walked out alone with my gun, when I made my notes, or otherwise, and was accompanied by a group of Bedowin boys, who collected flowers and Desert shrubs:—to avoid suspicion, I ascribed medicinal properties to what they brought,—and the Arabs were then in no manner surprised at my solicitude for them.

All orientals are early risers: the Arabs go to bed about ten, and their first sleep is over shortly after midnight. The poorer classes repose upon mats on the ground: those in better condition on rude bedsteads with four legs, having the frame crossed by ropes. Although I have known a Bedowin on a Desert journey travel three days and as many nights without any other slumber than that obtained on his camel, yet within a town or encampment they will sleep during the greater part of the day, without finding it any interruption to their usual repose at night, and they often expressed surprise that I did not thus indulge. As soon as it is light, an Arab commences his religious exercise by saying,

"La illa illella, Mahomuda rusoul Allah"*; he then awakens those around him (for in the Desert, as on board ship, they usually sleep in groups), and invites them to join in his prayers, which he most commonly begins with a verse from the Koran, intimating that prayer should be preferred to sleep. Their first repast, called "el moza," is taken shortly afterwards. If with a Sheïkh, our breakfast consisted of coffee, boiled rice, fish, and vegetables: but the poorer classes are content with dates and coarse bread. The former have also a mid-day meal, called "el sady," consisting of meat dressed in a variety of ways, and fruit: but the principal meal, with all classes, is that at sunset, called "asshar," with those who can afford it. Our dinner consisted of a lamb or sheep boiled whole, and stuffed with rice and spices, dishes full of ribs of mutton, soups and curries. Neither chairs nor tables are in request here; the several articles being brought in, and placed on circular mats upon the floor. Around these the company seat themselves cross-legged, without regard to any rules of precedence: some

* "No God but the God; and Mohammed is his Prophet."

one is invited to begin; then, after "Bismillah*," which is echoed by all present, a dozen hands are thrust at once into the dish. No beverage is called for during the meal, and a single draught of water concludes it: then, "Al hum'd Allah †," the guests rise, and the remains of the meal are abandoned to the servants and slaves.

The character of the Bedowin presents some singular contradictions. With a soul capable of the greatest exertions, he is naturally indolent. He will remain within his encampment for weeks, eating, drinking coffee, and smoking his nargyl, and then mount his camel, and away off to the Desert, on a journey of two or three hundred miles: whatever there may be his fatigues or privations, not a murmur escapes his lips. In excuse for their slothful habits at other periods, it may, however, be observed that the Koran prohibits all games of chance, and that their own rude and simple manners completely relieve them from the artificial pleasures and cares of more civilized life. In the account of my stay with the Benî-Abú-'Alî Bedowins,

* "In the name of God." † "Praise be to God."

I have given a description of their war-dance, which is graceful and impressive; but their other amusements are trifling, and utterly at variance with the usual gravity of their deportment. One is the game of blind man's buff, played by children in England: in another they conceal a ring, or some other ornament, under one of several inverted cups, and in discovering that, consists the art of the game. Professed story-tellers were also in great request, and I have often felt a high degree of interest in witnessing the effect of their tales on the listeners. They have little action, are seldom over-loud or vehement, but a choice selection of words, which flow apparently without effort, a peculiar, energetic, and even graceful delivery, and an invention or memory which appears never to flag, produce effects of which the most accomplished orator would feel proud: every feeling which he could hope for or desire was exhibited on these occasions.

In the absence of amusements of a higher interest than these, without arts or literature, and debarred, by the nature of their government and country, from any opportunity of

mental improvement, it is not surprising that the same species of credulity and superstition, but a few centuries ago so universal in Europe, should still hold its ground in Arabia. With many, a firm belief exists as to the power of enchanters and sorcerers; and their diabolical agency is thought to be principally exercised in transforming men into goats. It is even pretended that there are marks by which such unfortunates may be recognised; and a Bedowin, about to become a purchaser of a goat, may often be observed looking with much gravity and earnestness for them. I could never, however, prevail on them to explain of what nature they were. Many other tales of a similar nature were related to me, but, as they possess no higher interest, I forbear from narrating them. A talismanic power is also attributed to certain words, and, as with other Mohammedans, amulets and charms are worn, but their use is not so general as with the town Arabs.

CHAPTER XI.

Expectations of reaching the Wahhábí Capital—Unexpected obstacles—Lieutenant Whitelock—British Agent at Maskat—Refusal to honour the Author's Bills—Munificence of the Imám—Dangerous attack of Sickness—Compelled to return to the Sea-coast—Maty—Date Groves—Obstinacy of the Guides—Affecting incident—Temayel—Wádí Khor—Heat—Fortitude of the Bedowins—Wahhábí irruption into Omán—Presents of Persian Fruit—Grateful recollection of the Imám's kindness.

FROM what I had hitherto seen of the country, and gathered from several Arabs and Sheïkhs who had repeatedly traversed the road, I saw no reason to doubt but that I should be able, after completing the investigation of the northern portion of Omán, to proceed on to Der'ayyah, the Wahhábí capital; and it was therefore arranged that, while I occupied myself with filling up the map of my route from Súr, Lieutenant Whitelock should proceed to Maskat, in

order to procure the necessary funds for our journey, as well as to seek some influential individual to accompany us, for which purpose he left early in the morning of the 3rd of January. From this period until the 12th of the same month I was fully occupied with the map, and in making excursions into the surrounding country. On my return from one of these on the morning of the 8th, I found unexpected intelligence awaiting me.

In my application to government for leave to undertake my present journey, I had requested that the British agent at Maskat, Ruben ben Aslan, a Jew, should be directed to advance me such sums as I might, from time to time, find it necessary to draw on him; but, by some inadvertence, consequent to a press of business when my letter passed Council, no reply was made to that particular paragraph; but, upon referring to the Secretary's office, it was thought that, as I was furnished with a certificate, stating I was travelling under the direction of the British government, and requiring every assistance to be rendered to me, by those who were desirous of maintaining its friendship, that it was of

little moment, and I had already drawn, when in Maskat, a considerable sum from the agent. My surprise was, therefore, very great to learn from Whitelock this morning that he had refused to honour my bills, unless they previously obtained the sanction of Acting Commander J. B. Aines, in charge of the Hon. Company's brig Palinurus, then lying in the harbour, who, I had been given to understand in Bombay, was also instructed to afford me every possible assistance, but who, from motives to me inexplicable, did not, in this case, think proper to concur.

The several other merchants of Maskat, instigated, as I have reason to believe, by the former of these gentlemen, also declined to supply me with money. In this unpleasing and unlooked-for dilemma, I should have scarcely known how to proceed, had I not received by the same opportunity a communication from the Imám, stating that, having accidentally learnt how I was situated, he had given orders for my accommodation to any extent, by drafts upon his own treasury. The opposition I had encountered in quarters

so unexpected (which was of course immediately published abroad), not only created suspicions as to the honesty of my views, but even rendered it questionable if I was in reality the accredited person I had described myself to be. It was, therefore, with no ordinary feelings of gratitude that I found myself relieved from the probable consequences of these surmises by the generosity of the prince. The detention, however, to which this occurrence subjected me, was productive of consequences even more serious, and which for a time completely obstructed the objects of the expedition.

Several days elapsed before my letters could reach Lieutenant Whitelock, and during this period I was repeatedly warned by the Sheïkh that I was risking my health by staying so long at Neswah; that strangers from any part in Omán rarely remained more than three or four days without being attacked with dangerous fevers. Confiding, however, in my general health, which was then excellent, I was heedless enough to pay but little attention to their advice.

On the 10th all my servants fell sick, and

on the 13th I was added to the number. The fever was of the most violent and singular character, the paroxysms frequently coming on twice in the twenty-four hours, and sometimes never leaving the patient for double that period. It attacked my head, and produced delirium forty-eight hours after its first appearance. Without attendants, my situation was lonely and cheerless; and until the morning of the 18th I was insensible to all which was passing. I believe some Arabs, sent by the Sheïkh, took charge of me for a part of the time. The fever on the previous evening had reached its height, and a favourable change now took place; the cool blood again traversed my veins, I regained possession of my faculties, and gradually became better, though dreadfully reduced and debilitated.

On the 20th I was joined by Lieut. Whitelock, who had not been more fortunate than ourselves. He too was suffering from a fever caught at Maskat, which had left him so weak, that he could neither walk nor stand without assistance. He had procured the necessary funds, and entered into an engage-

ment with a Sheïkh, in the Imám's presence, to convey us, when we reached Bireïmah, with one hundred of his followers, to El Hassa, and from thence to Der'ayyah; but for the present it was necessary all our plans should be abandoned. To proceed in our present state of health was impossible; to remain at Neswah was to destroy the only chance of recovery for the other patients, who were now sinking fast; and not without a severe pang of vexation, I turned from all my former splendid visions, to a determination of proceeding at once to Sib, on the sea-coast, in which spot, renowned for its salubrity, I hoped in a short time to recover the health of all.

On the 22nd January, accompanied by the Sheïkh and about fifty of his followers, we left Neswah* in circumstances somewhat different from those under which we had first entered it. We were then full of health, and joyous at the idea of visiting unknown dis-

* Spelt Nizzúwah in the accompanying Map, which seems to be the more correct orthography. This town is called Tama in Idrisi's printed epitome.—*Geog. Nub.* page 54. In the Oxford MSS. it is spelt ثمى

tricts; but now, worn down and somewhat despondent from sickness, the appearance and condition of our party was far less enviable: one of the servants fell repeatedly from the ass on which he was mounted, and the Bedowins at last were compelled to lash him on a camel.

After four hours we reached Birket el Moge, which I have already noticed as enjoying a good climate; and here, finding it impossible, from the state of the party, to proceed, I pitched the tent, and determined to remain for a few days. My own health and spirits continued to improve at Birket, but that of the rest of the party received small amendment. The Arabs were very attentive, and supplied us with every necessary, and on the 26th January, there being a general belief that the party was strong enough to proceed once more, we struck the tent and continued our journey.

Quitting Birket at eleven hours, A.M., we continued for forty minutes through a date grove, and over cultivated ground, and then entered a shallow stony valley, with a few dwarfish mimosas scattered over its surface.

At 1·30 we passed the village and date grove of Zikki, which is romantically situated in a hollow, under some hills, on which also there are several towns. At two hours we passed the small hamlet and grove of Karrút, and at 3 P.M., arrived at the northern termination of the town of Maty, where we halted for the night.

Wednesday 27th. At 11 A.M. we left Maty, which contains about three hundred houses. Contiguous to it is another village, nearly equal in size, named Tihama. From hence our route continued along a stony valley, called Wadi Roweyha, with hills about five hundred feet in height on either hand. We passed several villages and date groves, which appear on the map; and water, with much cultivation, was seen throughout the day. Several káfilahs (caravans) of from thirty to forty camels passed us laden with fresh fish, principally sharks, for the interior towns. The approach of a long train of camels, as they move slowly along in these narrow and rugged glens, has a most picturesque and striking effect. Before emerging from some cape of the hills, we first hear the voice of the

camel-leader breaking the overheated sultriness of the atmosphere—now chanting to the utmost extent of his voice some traditionary song, or in reproachful accents chiding for tardiness or wanderings his docile, patient charge. Each animal has its separate rider; and as the whole train becomes exposed to view, the ever-ready matchlock and sword denote the general insecurity of the country; while the gay trappings of the camels, their lighter colour, the long woollen tufts suspended from the party-coloured saddles, and almost sweeping along the ground, stand out in bold relief from the dark and frowning crags around. We had a strong breeze, with dark cloudy weather, throughout the whole of the day. At four hours we halted at the hamlet of Byah.

Thursday 28th. The camel-men this morning were very clamorous, and from some whim of their own, after packing, they again removed everything from the camels, refusing to proceed, and at 11 A.M. were about to return to Neswah, leaving us to shift for ourselves. An old man, despatched by the Sheïkh of Neswah, on a supposition that

something of this kind might occur, arrived at the moment, and soon brought them to order, and at twelve hours we quitted Byah. The country we are passing over continues along a valley, and is nearly the same as that described yesterday. The hamlets, fresh water, &c., are equally numerous; they all appear on the map, and a mere insertion of their names, when no other distinction marks them, would answer no useful purpose. The hills on either hand are of a micaceous schist, of nearly equal height; they have usually a pyramidal outline, are rugged, and of a dark colour, crossed by veins and patches of a lighter grey. There is, however, a considerable change in the appearance of the soil; as we approach the coast it becomes more sandy and of a lighter colour. Instead of occurring in open plains, as within the oases, the groves are now found in narrow valleys, and in place of a falodge, all the streams leading to them are above the surface*. Fruit and grain become more scarce, and the date palm forms the principal object in sight. At five hours we halted at the south-east termination of the

* These streams are styled Tas'l.

town of Semáyel, which is considered the half-way station between Maskat and Neswah, and took up our quarters in a very small but neat Cadjan hut. A beautiful stream of water glided along before the door. Weary and faint from the fatigue of our day's journey, in order to enjoy the freshness of the evening breeze, I had spread my carpet beneath a tree. An Arab passing by, paused to gaze upon me, and touched by my condition and the melancholy which was depicted in my countenance, he proffered the salutation of peace, pointed to the crystal stream which, sparkling, held its course at my feet, and said, "Look, friend; for running water maketh the heart glad." With his hands folded over his breast, that mute but most graceful of Eastern salutations, he bowed and passed on. I was in a situation to estimate sympathy; and so much of that feeling was exhibited in the manner of this son of the Desert, that I have never since recurred to the incident, trifling as it is, without emotion. From the Sheïkh of this town we received much attention and civility; he expressed the most lively concern at witnessing the state of our health, and most confi-

dently predicted a speedy recovery at Sib: he even offered to allow two of his own slaves to accompany us to the coast, which was in a high degree liberal, for few Mussulmans are fond of lending their slaves to Christians.

Friday 29th. At 10·50 we left our comfortable quarters, and did not arrive at the opposite termination of Semayel until 12·50. Throughout the whole distance an abundance of water is found. On the heights, on either side the valley, which is about a quarter of a mile in width, watch-towers have been erected at various distances, and their appearance, perched on the summit of some craggy pinnacle, is very picturesque. At the termination of the Semayel grove, another nearly equally extensive, crosses it in a transverse direction; beyond this, with the exception of a small hamlet, the valley continues desert and barren, until we arrive at 5·20 at Furza, where there is a small fort erected on a neighbouring hill, around which are several neatly-constructed houses. We suffered much in our present weak state from the heat of the weather, which in these narrow valleys was at times truly oppressive. I have often, on such occasions, admired the patience of the Be-

dowins, who, with a pair of tattered sandals on their feet, which but partially protect them from the hot sand, and with heads bared to the scorching heat of the sun, will walk all day alongside their camels, without uttering a murmur of complaint or impatience, and in the evening will make their supper on dates and a draught of water in perfect contentment. In attacks of pain or disease they exhibit the same inherent spirit of resignation and fortitude. An old man we had with us on this occasion suffered so much from an internal complaint, that he frequently dismounted from his camel, and writhed in uncontrollable agony in the sand; yet when the paroxysm was over, not a syllable of discontent escaped him. Their children are also taught at an early age to suppress all outward signs of emotion; and whatever may be the extent of their misfortunes in after life, "Allah Akbar" (God is great) is all that escapes from them.

Saturday, 30*th*. At 10·30 we again proceeded, the face of the country having the same barren appearance as yesterday, until 12·30, when we entered Wádí Khor, through which a very large stream flows towards the sea. It

was beautifully clear, and in some places twenty feet across, with an irregular chain of pools six or eight feet in depth, and a line of date groves extending on either hand. We next ascended a small eminence, and beheld the sea; and continuing our journey over the maritime plain, at 3.50 arrived at Sib, where we took up our quarters in a small round fort, near the sea-beach. This rude tenement was, however, so infested with cats, rats, and other vermin, that I shifted our quarters to my tent, which, in order to enjoy the delicious coolness and freshness of the sea-breeze, we pitched beneath some trees near the beach. The climate of Sib had not been exaggerated, for after recovering from the immediate fatigue of the journey, the whole of the party rapidly recovered. To insure ourselves against the possibility of a relapse, which in these fevers is more to be dreaded than the original disease, I delayed my intention of moving until the 20th; and finding we were all then sufficiently recovered, wrote to the Imám at Maskat, requesting he would furnish a guide to conduct me to Bireïmah, the frontier station of the Wahhábís. From hence, though

the season was far advanced, I had but little reason to doubt being able, with some káfilah, yet to reach Der'ayyah. My disappointment was therefore very great on learning from his Highness in reply, that the Wahhábís had but a few days before made a sudden irruption into the northern parts of Omán; that they had seized, plundered, and burnt several towns near to Sohar; that the inhabitants of Abree, on the road to Bireïmah, were engaged in hostilities against their neighbours; and that his Highness would most strongly recommend, in the present unsettled state of affairs, that I should not continue my journey. I never contemplated being able to complete the duty on which I was employed without risk; and this was an occasion involving in itself the examination of nearly half the province, which appeared to justify my undergoing it to the fullest extent; nor did I as yet despair, if I could reach Bireïmah, of being able to pass on to Der'ayyah. With many acknowledgments, therefore, for his kindness, I communicated my wishes to the Imám, and I was highly pleased on the morning of the 24th to find at my tent a most re-

spectable old man, well known throughout the country, in perfect readiness to accompany us.

The houses at Sîb stand separately, and in groups of two or three, amidst the date groves. Fresh meat, fruit, and vegetables may be obtained, and the bazár, considering the small number of inhabitants, is well supplied. When the Imám heard of our arrival here, instructions were immediately despatched to the Sheïkh to furnish us with whatever we should require, and he certainly acted up to the spirit of the order. Small presents of fruit, brought from Persia, preserves, and other articles which it was thought might be agreeable or of service to us in our weak state, arrived occasionally from the Prince; and I have little doubt but that our speedy recovery was in a great measure owing to the unremitting attention we received.

I would here rather subject myself to the imputation of egotism, than omit the following anecdote, because it displays the generous feelings I have elsewhere attributed to this great prince, in a very favourable point of view. It has been previously noticed that during my stay at Maskat, a Frenchman was,

to appearance, dying, in a vessel alongside of that in which I was. Unwilling, however, to forego the chance which still remained of his recovery by change of air, I hired a boat to convey him to Síb, a situation possessing a more salubrious atmosphere than Maskat, and gave those to whose care he was entrusted a few dollars to defray his expenses in case he survived, or inter him should he not. When this circumstance was mentioned to the Prince, he struck the crooked staff* (which he carries, in common with all other Arabs,) forcibly on the ground, and said, with much energy, "*That's* a man."

When we reflect that the custom of giving presents, so general throughout the East, is in most cases directed by ostentatious rather than generous motives, and that his Highness was not ignorant of the national enmity existing between France and England, it required (at least in Asia) that nicety of feeling with which he is so eminently gifted to have enabled him to appreciate the motives in which, according to his judgment, the mere act of humanity I have briefly alluded to must

* This custom appears to be of great antiquity.—*See* HERODOTUS.

have originated. Hitherto too little has been known in Europe respecting this enlightened Prince. His recent appropriate present to our Sailor King of a large vessel of war completely equipped, and his desire to form a more intimate alliance with Great Britain, has brought him into some political notice, while his munificent encouragement of science and the arts, has attracted the attention of an influential learned society, which lately nominated him one of its honorary members.

These occurrences are but trifling, and I must solicit some indulgence for their insertion. Indeed, were I to record every act of consideration and kindness which we received from the Prince during our stay in Omán, there are few of the pages of this journal in which they might not be made to appear. To say that they were accepted with different and higher feelings than those with which we are usually disposed to view the favours of the great, expresses faintly my sense and recollection of them; but that they should have awakened a feeling of this nature, may convey an idea to others of the mode and spirit in which they were bestowed.

CHAPTER XII.

How to avoid being plundered—Bedowin Fort—Intense cold—Crossing Torrents—Rapid Vegetation—Burka—Population, Trade, Revenue, &c.—Arab Law-suits—The Bazár—Fishery—Mesnáh—Interview with the Sheïkh—Dissimulation—Dates—Distillation of Arrack—Superb Shells—Suweïk—The Sheïkh's Wife—Seyyid Hilál—Personal Appearance and Generosity—Energy and Influence of Arab Females.

February 25th. At 2·10 we left our encampment. Our life here had been so dull and monotonous, that none of the party were sorry to quit it. In order to hold out as little temptation as possible for plunder to the wild tribes with which we were about to mix, we had reduced our baggage to a single trunk and the inner part of the tent: so that the number of camels was reduced to five, the same number as the party.

After leaving the skirts of the village, we continued, until 4·30, to pass a succession of

gardens and the richest vegetation. Fields of wheat and barley continually presented themselves springing from a dark and loamy soil.

At 5·30, being overtaken by a violent squall, we were happy to obtain shelter in a wretched building called a Bedowin fort. The rain fell in torrents, and the thunder and lightning were truly awful: at times it blew a hurricane, and the camels grew so alarmed that, though turned adrift to browse on the herbage around, they crowded about the door whenever it was opened, and endeavoured to effect an entrance. Some females, who had followed the party from Síb, were crying all night with fright and cold, for the roof of the small space in which we had crowded, admitted the water in every direction, and all were completely drenched. I was most happy when the dawn of day permitted us to crawl out of our den, and warm our cramped limbs in the sun.

Friday, 26th February. Last night's heavy rain has filled the hitherto dry beds of all the streams, and now, having overflown their banks, they are rushing with much impetu-

osity towards the sea. We easily crossed all these on our camels, but in several places the poor asses, driven before us, lost their footing in the violence of the current, and were in imminent danger of perishing. Every part of the road being flooded, we, in consequence, soon lost all traces of the track, and, after floundering about until we were all covered with mud, I prevailed on old Ali Ibn Megati to cross over to the sea-beach. The peasants we met were all, however, in high glee at the prospect of a plentiful harvest, and the abundant pasturage which would now very shortly be afforded to their flocks. It is, indeed, most astonishing to witness the change a single shower produces on the face of this country. The most arid and sandy districts become, with others more promising, completely clothed with a light grass, which, for a time, wholly changes the appearance of the country; but this, unfortunately, is of brief duration. The dews at night afford nourishment for a time, but the heat of the sun's rays soon predominates, and, in a week or ten days, all becomes parched and arid as before.

Burka was formerly the summer residence of the Imám, and here he rid himself, by stratagem, of his formidable uncle, Seif Ibn Buddu.

At present Burka is principally remarkable for its fort, which, owing to its great height and size, is very conspicuous from seaward. It mounts thirty pieces of artillery; but so little attention is paid to them or their carriages, that not one half could be fired; yet is it deemed by the Arabs impregnable; nor, probably, so far as they themselves are concerned, are they mistaken. An almost total ignorance in such affairs is common to both the attacking party and the besieged, and the means and appliances of the former would be insufficient to overcome the advantages possessed by the latter. Seyyid Hilál's harem was confined here at the period of my visit, and we were not, in consequence, admitted beyond one of the towers near the entrance. From the summit of this I, however, obtained a good set of theodolite bearings, and also a tolerable view of the town and its neighbourhood. Surrounding the fort, at a distance of two hundred yards from

either side, there is a turreted wall, and, within the intermediate space, some neat and substantial houses. I noticed, as a peculiarity, several that had pillars in front, supporting a rude portico: this I never observed in any other part of Arabia. The other habitations are merely cadjan huts, containing by far the greatest number of inhabitants.

Including women and children, the population of Burka may be estimated at four thousand. A considerable portion of these, as on other parts of the coast, are employed in fishing, and the remainder attend the date trees. The bazár is very extensive, and the Bedowins flock in from the surrounding country to make purchases of grain, cloth, &c., and almost every article procurable in Maskat may be obtained here. The anchorage at Burka is an open roadstead, affording no protection against the prevailing breezes. The same remark applies to nearly every town on the coast, and they have, in consequence, but few bagalás of any burthen trading along it. Merchandize is brought from or conveyed to Maskat in small boats, of from thirty to fifty tons burthen. Vessels of this size upon the

approach of bad weather are hauled upon shore beyond the action of the sea with little difficulty.

A revenue of from three to four hundred dollars is annually drawn from Burka. It arises principally from dates, on which, as well as on all other exports or imports, a duty of ten per cent. is levied. The Imám maintains a small force of about two hundred men here: their wages are partly paid out of this impost.

Sunday, 28*th*. We passed the morning in listening to some law cases, mostly relative to debts and trifling offences, which were decided by the Kadi. It rained hard all day, and we were unable to leave, but derived considerable amusement from watching the busy scenes passing in the bazár. The seller disposes his several articles in a heap before him, and seats himself quietly on his haunches beside it. A buyer approaches, and the affair is settled, probably, after not more than half a dozen words have been spoken. But mark the contrast: at the distance of a few yards is also seated a female, who sells grain; one of her own sex approaches for the purpose of

buying;—that war of words has lasted now nearly an hour, and yet appears no nearer a conclusion than at first. Here there is a boy with a basket of dates on his head, bawling forth, as he totters under the weight of his load, the superiority of his commodity and its price. There, a man parading to and fro with a turban and a pair of sandals. At a distance are some butchers' stalls, and beef, mutton, &c., are doled out to those who crowd around it, by means of a very rude pair of wooden scales, having stones as a substitute for weights.

Monday, February 29th. Quitting Burka, at eight hours, we passed in succession the various villages and towns which appear on the map. The fishery is here conducted on a grand scale, by means of nets many hundred fathoms in length, which are carried out by boats. The upper part is supported by small blocks of wood, formed from the light and buoyant branches of the date palm, while the lower part is loaded with lead. To either extremity of this a rope is attached, by which, when the whole of the net is laid out, about thirty or forty men drag it towards the shore.

The quantity thus secured is enormous, and what they do not require for their own consumption is salted and carried into the interior. When, as is very generally the case, the nets are the common property of the whole village, they divide the produce into equal shares; but if they belong to a private individual, or a company, those only who assist receive a share proportionate to their degree of labour.

Upon our first arrival at Mesnáah, I went to the Sheïkh's house, and, after waiting upwards of an hour in a court-yard, amidst his slaves, and without any protection from the sun, I became somewhat angry, and passed on to a small date grove, about a mile from the town, where we pitched our tent.

February 30*th.* At daylight on the following morning I received a visit from the Sheïkh, who came to seek an explanation for my leaving his town without seeing him. He exhibited as much state as his means enabled him to assume, walking alone at a pace or two before his followers, who were about thirty in number. After he had seated himself, and made known the purport of his

visit, I simply stated, that it was not our custom to stand at any man's door for the length of time I had waited at his, and if he had been aware of it, I was sorry he so lightly considered the character of a British officer as to suppose he would put up with such treatment, and that if his slaves were our servants, they would be severely punished for their neglect. He expressed the utmost surprise at all this, which he pretended to have heard for the first time, observing that he was at prayers, and hoped I would think no more of the matter. He then took his leave, swearing vengeance against his attendants,—all which was, however, feigned, —the very men being at that time standing around him. It is but fair to confess that such behaviour is by no means common, excepting, as in this instance, with petty Sheïkhs, who strive to enhance their dignity in the eyes of their followers, by keeping persons of any consideration waiting when they call upon them.

The date trees on this coast form a continuous grove to Khórfakán, a distance of one hundred and fifty miles, and the Arabs

have a saying that a traveller may proceed the whole distance without ever losing their shade. Dates form the principal export from Omán, large quantities being taken to India, where a considerable share is consumed in making the government arrack. The middle classes of the Mussulman and Hindoo population are very partial to them. The best are brought from Basrah and Bahreïn, those from Omán being classed next in excellence. There are several methods of preserving them; some are simply dried, and then strung on lines; others, which is the usual plan, are packed in baskets. Notwithstanding their great number, every tree has its separate owner, and disputes between the relations of those who die intestate are, in consequence, very frequent. Towards noon we left our encampment, and continued along the beach, passing numerous hamlets and villages. Firewood seems very plentiful here; it is packed in large stacks, ranged along the beach, so that boats in passing run in, purchase, and load at once. From thence we passed the skeleton of a whale, a large quantity of roots of trees, and other drift-

wood, several varieties of sea-weed, of which the *Sargossum vulgare* and the *Fucus barbatus* were most commonly met with. The beach was almost entirely composed of fragments of most superb shells, and I picked up several very beautiful specimens.

At 3·30 we arrived at Suik, and found the Sheïkh absent, looking for the Wahhábís, who, it had been reported, were then in the neighbourhood; but we were most hospitably received by the Sheïkh's wife, who had a house and every other accommodation very soon prepared for us. The orders of this lady (of whom more anon) were much to the point. "You will please those gentlemen," said she to her slaves who were sent to attend us, "and let them want nothing, or look to your heads." We accordingly received every luxury which the Sheïkh's kitchen could afford.

In the course of the evening the Sheïkh returned from an unsuccessful search. I had procured a letter for this individual from the Bombay government, as he was considered to possess considerable influence over the Bedowins in Northern Omán. Probably no-

thing could have afforded him more satisfaction than this mark of our notice, and he was, partly from this, and partly from his own natural hospitality, most attentive to me during my stay.

Seyyid Hilál, a cousin of Seyyid S'aid's, is about thirty-five years of age, and in point of character, he stands of all the chiefs of Omán next to that prince: his figure is tall and commanding; he excels in all warlike exercises; is passionately attached to hunting and other field sports; and though somewhat spare in figure, is considered, in addition to his extraordinary agility, the strongest man of his nation: he is generous to profusion. I have heard the Arabs in Maskat relate that when upon a visit to the Imám, he has received from him a present of eight hundred or a thousand dollars; in the course of a couple of hours afterwards, he has bestowed the whole of it in presents to his followers.

When the surveying vessels visited this coast in 1828, a large portion of the surrounding country, including the extensive groves of Kothrá, and many towns on the sea-coast, were tributary to this chief; but

shortly after the Sheïkh of Sohár possessed himself of his own territory he, with a view of increasing the number of his forces, so as to enable him to act with greater efficiency against the Imám, made an offer to the several petty Sheïkhs and their followers, if they would enlist under his banners, and quit those of Seyyid Hilál, to remit the whole of the imposts which had been by that chief formerly exacted from them. The bait was too tempting to be resisted, and in the course of a few days Seyyid Hilál, from possessing an influence which had rendered him formidable even to the Imám, found himself stripped of his territory, his revenue, and his power, and eventually became a mere pensionary to him.

Connected with this struggle, two events occurred, which display the energy and influence of the Arab females in so strong a light, that I shall give insertion to them.

A few years ago, Seyyid Hilál was induced, under promise of protection, to proceed to Maskat. Some accusations were brought against him of endeavouring to subvert the authority of the Imám, by instigating the Bedowins to rebellion. Immediately that the

Sheïkh's wife, a sister of Sayyid S'aid's, heard the intelligence, she sent messengers to collect the various Bedowin tribes who were in the interest of her husband, and made other preparations to march in person against the dominions of the Imám; but before any succours could arrive, the latter had despatched a force to Suweïk, in order to take possession of the fort, with an assurance, that unless it was given up, the Sheïkh should be put to death. "Go back," said this spirited female, when the message was delivered to her; "Go back to those who sent you, and tell them that I will defend the fort to the utmost of my power; and if they choose to cut him to pieces before me, they will find it make no alteration in my resolution." She accordingly defended it with so much bravery and skill, that the Imám's force, after losing several men and wasting considerable time, were compelled to raise the siege and proceed to Maskat. Some months afterwards, the Imám became convinced of the falsehood of the charges exhibited against the Sheïkh, and permitted him to return to his own government.

The Sheïkh's sister distinguished herself in

a similar manner while in charge of the same fort, against an unexpected attack made by the Sheïkh of Sohar. The latter was passing on his road to Rosták, with a body of about two hundred men, without any apparent intention of acting against it, when he suddenly turned, and brought the whole of his force before the walls.

Though the Sheïkh was absent, his place was well supplied by this lady, who closed the gates, collected the garrison, harangued them, and finally made such good use of the guns, which are mounted on the towers, that after a stay of three days, and several ineffectual attempts to lead his troops again to the assault, the Sheïkh was obliged to abandon his enterprise.

Report says that Sayyid Hilál feels the greatest respect for, and stands in some awe of this dame, without whose advice and concurrence he undertakes nothing of moment.

CHAPTER XIII.

Household of Sayyid Hilál—A Professed Story-teller—Arabian Nights—Arab Artillery—Anecdote—Manufactures, &c., of Suweïk—Arab Horsemanship—Weapons—Hire Horses—Bid adieu to the Sheïkh—Shepherds—Kothrá—Irruption of the Wahhábis—El dbú Sheïd—Cultivation—Alarm—Desertion of the Guard—Feletch, Romantic situation of— A ragged Regiment—Mountain Torrent—Cheerful Encampment—Dangerous Ford—Muskin—Progress of Vegetation.

Sayyid Hilál lives in more state than any other chief I have met with in Omán. The number of his household slaves is said to exceed a hundred; and of these twenty or thirty, attached to his person, wear a neat uniform. A huge meal, consisting of a great variety of dishes, sufficient for thirty or forty people, was prepared in his kitchen, and brought to us on large copper dishes, twice a day during the time we remained. They were all dressed according to the most approved Persian style, and we soon became warm converts to their culinary process. On

these occasions, there was a great profusion of blue and gilt China ware, cut glass dishes, and decanters, containing not wine but sherbet, with several other costly articles. The Sheïkh, after his evening meal, usually passed several hours with us. I was fond of leading him to various topics connected with the tribes in northern Omán, and his conversation afforded me much interesting and valuable intelligence.

On one occasion he was accompanied by a professed story-teller, who appeared to be a great favourite with him. "Whenever I feel melancholy or out of order," said the Sheïkh, "I send for this individual, who very soon restores me to my wonted spirit." From the falsetto tone in which the story was chanted, I could not follow the thread of the tale, and upon my mentioning this to him, the Sheïkh very kindly sent me the manuscript, of which the reciter had availed himself. With little variation, I found it to be the identical Sinbad the Sailor, so familiar to the readers of the Arabian Nights. I little thought, when first I perused these fascinating tales in my own language, that it would ever be my lot to

listen to the original, in a spot so congenial and so remote.

Suweïk is a small walled town containing about seven hundred houses. The fort, situated nearly in the centre, and garrisoned by the Sheïkh's household slaves, is a large strong building, mounting a few guns on its towers. The Arabs have a singular practice of keeping two or three pieces of artillery just without the entrance of their forts. As I passed these one day with the Sheïkh, I inquired of him if it would not prove somewhat awkward if the castle should be surprised, and the attacking party get possession of these, so that they could at once, by blowing open the gates, obtain a fair entrance. He laughed and said, "Our warfare differs somewhat from yours, as I had reason to witness at Benî Abú 'Alî. In the first place, the Arabs, in all probability, would not think of such an act, and even if they did, as you know we do not carry guns when we go to war, I question whether they could muster sufficient powder, or if so, know how to load them afterwards."

The greater number of people belonging to

Suweïk live in small huts without the walls. They fabricate turbans and lungis here, but the greater number, as in most other parts of the coast, are employed in fishing or agricultural pursuits.

The population is a good deal mixed, but the same toleration is exercised as in Maskat. Even the Shiahs have a mosque here.

Friday, March 4th. At 10·45, accompanied by the Sheïkh and about 40 horsemen, we left the town. Having emerged from the groves upon the open plains, they amused us with a display of their mode of attack in battle. In wheeling and pulling up at full gallop, they display on these occasions great command over their horses, and the bit they use is certainly a very severe instrument. They have no stirrups, and in place of a saddle, throw a quilt, stuffed with cotton, across the animal's back.

Their principal and most formidable weapon is a spear about fifteen feet in length ornamented near the extremity with a tuft of red and black feathers. This is never thrown, but carried in nearly the same manner as was usual with the ancient chivalry of Europe.

Their loose, gay dresses, and splendid steeds of the purest Nejd breed, as they scoured at full gallop across the plain from various directions, were exhibited to great advantage. They have, on these occasions, a favourite manœuvre by which individuals clasp each other by the thigh, and thus, side by side, urge their steeds to the utmost fleetness. Accompanied by this gay party, all in the highest degree animated and excited, we pursued our course for five or six miles. Sayyid Hilál, who rode a beautiful horse, the value of which was estimated at three thousand dollars, and who had been foremost, in every exercise, then dismounted, and with many cautions as to our future line of action amidst his unruly neighbours, bid us a very kind farewell. We shook hands with all his followers, and then, as John Bunyan says, "went on our way."

The groves and cultivated ground extend about three miles from the beach. Beyond that, the plains are crossed by many shallow streams, which have originated amidst the hills during the late rains. Very large gaff and sumr trees dot the surface of the landscape; and seated beneath their scanty and

feathery shade, might frequently be seen an Arab shepherd, with several enormous dogs to aid him in his charge of the flock grazing around; but his pipe and crook are wanting: their place is supplied by the matchlock and spear.

At one hour we arrived (our course from Suweïk being W. ½ N.) at the straggling and extensive Bedowin encampment of Kothrá. Their huts are constructed of cadjans, and in order to shelter the inmates from occasional showers, are mostly shaped like the roof of an English barn.

I was told by our guide, Sayyid ibn Mutlock, that about four years ago, the Wahhábís, in a predatory excursion, approached Kothrá by night, as was their usual custom, with a view to burn it. However, partly owing to their constant broils, and partly to the expectation of an attack from another quarter on the same evening, its inhabitants were well prepared; and it was not until they had beaten off the enemy with considerable loss, that they discovered who their real adversaries were. Such is the dread inspired by the ravages of these fanatics, that upon any rumour of their

approach private feuds are forgotten, and the several tribes forthwith unite together for mutual protection. These inroads are not, therefore, without their use; they frequently prove, as in this case, the means of bringing together two tribes who for many years before had been at feud. Intermarriages then take place, and they become fixed in permanent alliance.

El ábú Sheïd, El Sád, and El Hilál, are the principal tribes now confederated together, whose aggregate number is estimated at three thousand men. They have numerous date groves, fields of grain, and plantations of sugar, cotton, and indigo. Within their groves are several forts, for they are an untractable race, caring nothing for Sayyid S'aïd, or the Sheïkh of Sohar. Although they formerly paid the zireat or tithe to the Sheïkh of Suweïk, they now are frequently at feud with him.

It being anticipated that something at issue at this period would lead to a disturbance, our party fetched a long circuit to avoid their encampment: this was settled before my return, for we then passed without molestation

through the centre of it. At four hours the country alters its appearance; we have small hills intersected by deep narrow ravines, at the bottom of which there is a rich grass, on which numerous sheep were feeding. At 5·45 we arrived at the village of Feletch.

The whole country seems in a state of great alarm, owing to an anticipated visit from the Wahhábís. Ali ibn Negati was constantly inquiring for intelligence of all we met; while, on the other hand, the unexpected appearance of our party created a most amusing scene of alarm and confusion. Girls and boys screamed; men ran for their arms; their dogs barked incessantly; while mothers were seen flying with their children under their arms, and adding by the shrilness of their voices, a delightful tenor to the Babel of sounds with which we were saluted. In vain Ali lifted up his voice to proclaim who we were; it only increased the confusion. I then suggested that the party should halt when we reached a small eminence, and send a single slave to quiet them and explain matters. This produced the desired effect. In a few minutes they were all, male and

female, chatting and laughing around us with a vivacity and pleasure proportionate to their former alarm. They then very obligingly sent a meal of boiled mutton and rice, sufficient for the whole party.

Saturday, March 5th. We found this morning that our guard, notwithstanding the positive directions they received from Sayyid Hilál at Suweïk, to accompany us to Obrí, had decamped during the night with the camels, camel-men, and old Ali's ass. I was so much amused at the ire he displayed, and the curses he bestowed on them, their fathers, and forefathers, that I forgot our own helpless situation and detention. However, after breakfast, we prevailed on the Sheïkh to ride over to a small town in the neighbourhood, where, as a káfilah had passed yesterday, it was thought that others might be procured, and about noon he returned with as many as we required.

Feletch is most romantically situated in a hollow, and consists of not more than two hundred houses interspersed amidst the trees, which frequently fling their bright green foliage over or around them, so as to render but a small portion visible. It is not easy for

mere description to convey an idea of the singular effect produced by the verdant appearance of this hollow, when contrasted with the light brown or chalky appearance of the hills which bound it. At 1·10 we left Feletch, with a ragged guard of six individuals, which the Sheïkh insisted upon our taking. Our new friends certainly appeared, as far as clothing went, in somewhat indifferent trim. Their matchlocks too were rusted more than half through; and otherwise, both as regards equipment and variety of figure and age, they really formed no bad prototypes of Falstaff's recruits. Moreover, they rode on asses, which here are somewhat diminutive, and the contrast they presented to those mounted on the magnificent animals they were sent to protect, was too amusing to pass unnoticed even by the sedate and sober Ali, for, directly it appeared that he would have to travel in their company, he quitted the ass procured for him in lieu of the one he had lost, and mounted a camel. Our route lay for some time along the margin of a valley called Wádí Gabír, whose bed was but just moistened in the centre by a stream, which, however, formed

at the sides a few shallow pools. We passed several colocynth shrubs to-day, and also a kind of dwarfish bush, bearing a small red fruit, in size and flavour resembling a cranberry, of which the Bedowins are very fond. At four hours, descending a pass, we entered the valley of Russut el Kuroos, and at 5·15 halted at the hamlet of Sidán: we were delighted with our resting-place, which was just at the gorge of the pass, where it emerges from amidst a pile of mountains of great height. The rugged and pinnacled summits of these shadowy masses, as they rose abruptly in quick succession before us, were now receiving the last bright and gorgeous tints of a setting sun; but the lower ranges were already lost in the evening's gloom. We could just perceive a mountain torrent about fifty yards in width, which takes its rise amidst the chain, and was now chafing or forming its way along the valley, over and between the rocks and other obstructions which line its bed. We soon lighted a large fire on its banks, by which we prepared our evening meal. Enjoying all our former health and wonted spirits, we indulged, whilst seated

around its cheerful flames, in those gay and sanguine anticipations of the future, which involuntarily arise when the mind, warped for a time by sickness, recovers its former tone and elasticity. I believe that, whilst under the influence of this peculiar reaction, any incident or adventure, however perilous and wild, provided it afforded an ample portion of excitement, would have been far from disagreeable to us.

March 6th. After taking a hasty sketch of the entrance to this pass and the contiguous mountains, at 10·30 I continued my journey through the valley. There was no track except along the bed of the stream, which in some places was so deep and rapid that it nearly swept my horse from his legs. A few date groves, and an occasional cluster of huts, show themselves on either hand. At 2 P.M. we struck off by a minor branch of the stream, along Wádí Thilah, to the westward. We had now penetrated beyond the lower ridges to the main branch of the mountains, which rose in steep precipices to the height of from three thousand to four thousand feet, terminating in abrupt and pointed forms.

Mica, slate, and felspar enters largely into their composition, and I spent a considerable time in examining the singular contortions of the former. A few aloes, dwarfish bushes and aromatic shrubs, on which some sheep browsed, are the only signs of vegetable life we met with, and at 5·30 we halted on the summit of a small hill. Old Ali's apprehensions respecting the Wahábís were evidently increasing, for he stationed a guard with loaded matchlocks to look out during the night. I learnt, from casually questioning him on the subject, that his fears arose from the circumstance of the tract we were now crossing not being in the possession of Sayyid S'aid, but in that of his rival Mohammed of Sohar.

Monday, 7th. At 11·30 we continued our journey along Wádí Thilah, passing the mouths of several lateral valleys. Our course now became so devious that I found it impossible to keep any account of it. At 2·30 we ascended a hill about eight hundred feet in height, but I could obtain no other view from its summit than a vast wilderness of bare, bleak rocks and hills. After crossing this

ridge, we gained the territory of the Beni Kalbán, whose acknowledgment of the Imám's authority so delighted old Saaf, that on dismounting at the hour of prayer, he expressed his satisfaction by giving his camel more than half his supply of dates. We continued journeying for three hours along the valley, which is called Wádí Kalban, the name of its inhabitants, and passed large clustering patches of aloes, bearing a greater resemblance to those of India than to the Aloe Socrotina.

At 5·50 we halted, in the neighbourhood of Muskin, near some inclosures of wheat, which were secured from the intrusions of cattle by means of a rude fence constructed with the thorny branches of the nebek. Muskin is a small village, and appears to have derived its name from its peculiar situation amidst the hills. I was highly delighted to observe within these groves the whole process of vegetation exhibited in various stages of advancement, by each particular species of tree. The date-palms were shedding the last year's leaves; the mango, the plantain, the nebek, and the fig had renewed their foliage; the

branches of the vine are still denuded; while in their immediate vicinity the peasant is engaged reaping his corn: thus we see before us the peculiar attributes of each season produced from different causes, at one and the same time.

CHAPTER XIV.

Tedious progress—Arab Bargains—Anecdote—Attempts at imposition—Remedy—Honesty—Reflections—Mode of obtaining a proper insight into Character—Quit Muskin—Ophthalmia—Sheïkh Nasser—Attempts to dissuade the Author from proceeding — Makiniyat — Arab Funerals — Green Mountains — Solar Heat—Deresi—Shady Groves—General appearance of the Sheïkhs of Omán—A Contrast—Inhospitable Treatment—The Wahhábis—Expectation of an affray—Prepare to quit Obrí.

Wednesday, March 9th. Our progress through this part of the country is rendered slow and tedious, in consequence of its being divided into separate districts, all in a manner independent of each other, and acknowledging but slightly the power of any general authority. As those who furnish camels for their own district will not, nor would they be permitted, to proceed further, it results that on entering the frontier of another, we are delayed to bargain for a fresh supply. This business, which sometimes lasted for two or

three hours in one uninterrupted war of words, I was too happy to resign to old Ali, who entered with all an Arab's eagerness and talents for disputation into its full spirit. The patience of an Englishman (I advance the remark advisedly), however extensive his travels, would assuredly fail him on such occasions in a few minutes, and the wily Arab wishes no better advantage. Not so my friend Ali, who, confident of his own consummate address, appeared perfectly in his element. Their bargains usually commence in a low tone, by one party naming a price, ten times greater than what he intends to take, or expects the other to give: a sneer, or stare of well-feigned astonishment, is the only answer: the debate gradually becomes warmer, and the parties shift their seats from one spot to the other. At one time old Ali's voice could be heard shouting high above that of his opponent; at another time, huddled together in some hollow, as if afraid the very winds might bear away some part of their counsels, I could just catch the sound of his voice, exerted in tones of pathos, reproach, expostulation, or entreaty. At length he would start up and

retire, breathing maledictions against their unheard-of rapacity, but followed by one or two of the by-standers who bring him back, when a repetition of the same scenes occurs, until the affair is settled. I must again repeat that no human being, save an Arab, could endure the trial to which his patience is subjected whilst adjusting these interminable bargains. Even when the affair, to all appearance, has been settled, something still remains to furnish a plea for new exactions; a further supply of dates for themselves, or fodder for their cattle, I found to be the favourite plea. Very often in the course of this journey I have been delayed for hours, rather than yield up a quarter of a dollar more than Ali informed me was the customary demand. When in Jaïlan I had tried at first a contrary plan; but got tired of giving long before they were of asking; indeed, the experience of a few days convinced me that any concession was, in proportion to the amount conceded, made the plea for further exactions. In general, professed carriers, among the Bedowins, are a cheating, lying, avaricious race; yet have they good qualities,

among which may be noticed a thorough detestation of petty theft. I never lost the most trifling article of my baggage, but have frequently known them seek for any missing article with far more anxiety than I felt respecting it; and in fetching wood, water, and other similar duties, when we halted, they were usually very obliging.

There is a class of travellers who proceed through a country with a determination to shut their eyes against all which does not accord with their peculiar views. They either entirely omit or only touch slightly on unfavourable points of character and manners, and are, generally speaking, more pleasing companions than men who pursue an opposite course. Yet it can scarcely admit of a question, that a perfect estimate of the character of any people can only be acquired from a thorough knowledge of their vices as well as virtues; and the result of the examination will be, that both are more equally distributed than does at first sight appear. Viewing the matter in this light, and aware how illiberal it is to generalise upon any topic, I have always endea-

voured to record faithfully my impressions of those amongst whom I have been thrown, whether for good or evil. It has never occurred to me that the reader would consider their merits and demerits otherwise than abstractedly, and not as furnishing a national portraiture, which, in the instance I have just given, would be as unjust as if an estimate of the English character were formed from its hackney or stage coachmen.

March 10th.—At 12·30 we left Muskin for Makiniyat, and at five hours halted near the castle, where the chief of the Beni Kalban, Sheïkh Wasser, resides. In the course of a few minutes, though he appeared to be suffering from ophthalmia, he made his appearance to welcome us; but when I presented Sayyid S'aid's letters, which were very strongly worded, and contained an urgent request that he would pass us on, he seemed sorely troubled. "Almost daily," said he, "are individuals proceeding alone to Obrí robbed for the sake of the tattered clothes on their backs; and I am required to conduct you in safety, where the very name of an English-

man will be sufficient to attract a host of plunderers." I told him that, having been made aware of the risks to be encountered long before we left, we should endeavour to bear any misfortune of that nature with good grace; and here indeed we were perfectly sincere, having taken good care to bring nothing of value with us. This evening and the greater part of the following day were consumed in negotiating with the Sheïkh; but finding we were not to be driven from our purpose, he agreed on the morrow to furnish us with the best and largest guard his situation would admit of.

Though once a large city, Makiniyat has dwindled down to its present insignificant state, having never, as I was given to understand, recovered from a visit which the Wahhábís paid to it in 1800. They then took the castle, burnt the houses, and destroyed the greater number of trees. By a noon observation, and several meridional transits of the stars, I fixed the latitude of Makiniyat at 23° 21′ 25″ north. Here, as with many other towns in Omán, I was surprised at the little care which they bestow in the burial of their

dead. The corpse, after being washed, is covered with a cloth and interred with very little ceremony. The grave is usually not more than three feet in depth, and after interment, a rude stone, without inscription of any kind, is placed at the head and feet.

During my stay here a female died who was related to the Sheïkh, and he, with all the male relations, followed the corpse to the grave. There are no hired mourners in these towns, but the females from the neighbourhood of the deceased assemble, and continue for eight days, from sunrise to sunset, to utter loud and mournful lamentations.

March 11*th*. The body of the Green Mountains bore this morning E. by S. ½ S., and were distant about thirty-five miles. I found the Sheïkh had assembled a guard of seventy men, scarcely more respectable in appearance, though somewhat better mounted than those supplied us from Muskin. At 10·30 we left the skirts of the town, and proceeded west, at a rapid pace, over the plains. Our escort sent forth scouts to the right and left, and an advanced party a-head: notwithstanding all their apprehensions, we reached

the village of Ayal at 1.30, without meeting with a single individual. Our route ran along a broad valley, on either side of which the hills run in a table-topped range, with sloping sides, or are broken into detached chains, presenting isolated pyramidal hills, somewhat truncated at the upper part, but of the same uniform level and direction as the continuous ridges. Quitting Ayal, where we obtained a second guard, we entered another broad valley, in the centre of which there ran a narrow rivulet, and at 5·30 put up for the night at the small village of Arudh.

March 12*th*. At ten hours our guard, who had passed the night right joyously within the walls of the village, being collected, we left, and crossed a succession of sandy, barren plains, similar to those of yesterday. Not a breath of wind was stirring, and as we occasionally passed through the narrow valleys which intersected our path, the concentration of the solar heat within them was almost overpowering.

At 12·50 we passed the extensive grove and town of Derese, with the people of which our party were at feud, and, in consequence,

we gave it a wide berth. At 1·50 we arrived at the town of Inán: here the Sheïkh of the tribe resides. A few years ago he was possessed of considerable influence, not only in his immediate vicinity, but also with the most powerful tribes in Nejd; but his power is now confined to Inán, where he usually shuts himself up in its fort. Our path conducted us through the centre of the town, and I observed that cultivation was carried on in inclosures to an extent equal to any spot I have seen in Omán: some of the trees are also very lofty, and, again, an imagination at all alive to passing scenes must have been forcibly struck by the contrast which the shade and gloom, upon which we were now entering, presented to the dust and heat of the parched and sandy track we had just quitted. After passing another town, somewhat similar, at 3·50 we arrived at Obrí. Passing the bazár, they conducted us to an open space before the Sheïkh's house, where we were left with our baggage to await his appearance. Towards sunset he paid us a visit, and I thought I could perceive at a glance the character of the being we had to

deal with. It will apply as a general remark, that the Sheïkhs of the towns in Omán are very personable men, with a dignified deportment and pleasing manners; but this was a sneaking, greasy-looking animal, who had more the appearance of a butcher than a Sheïkh. Upon my producing the Imám's letters he read them, and, without returning any answer, took his leave. About an hour afterwards he sent a verbal message to request that I should lose no time in quitting his town, as he begged to inform me, what he supposed I could not have been aware of, that it was then filled with nearly two thousand Wahhábís. This was, indeed, news to us; it was somewhat earlier than we anticipated falling in with them,—but we put a good face on the matter, and behaved as coolly as we well could. In the mean time we prepared to pitch our tent, and, having done so, sent a messenger to the Sheïkh to intimate that I wished to see him. About nine, A.M., he came, accompanied by some cut-throat looking ruffians, whom he styled his relations. I then led the conversation at once to the subject, and inquired what num-

ber of men he could furnish to conduct me to Bireimah. This roused him, and he swore by the beard of the Prophet, such was now the danger of the road, that he neither could nor would furnish me with a man. I was unprepared for his refusal, but, as we should never take an Arab at his first word, I strove, by every argument I could think of, to shake his resolution. I stated that the dangers of the road were well known to Seyyid S'aid at the time he addressed the letters, and his certain anger when he should learn that he had been disobeyed. I hinted that I would myself amply reward him, provided he would comply; but he remained unmoved. Then, as a last resource, I told him that I could not think of going back, unless he furnished me with a letter to the Imám, containing the substance of his present communication, which he very readily promised to do. I inquired if it was true he had sent a verbal message to request I should leave his town: this of course he denied, but ten minutes afterwards indirectly repeated it, and then left. We experienced none of those offers of assistance, provisions, or other accommodations, which we

had been always in the habit of receiving from the other Sheïkhs in Omán, his object without doubt being to drive us out of the town as soon as he could; and all I saw and heard gave me little reason to delay obliging him in that respect. The Wahhábís had been crowding around us in great numbers, and seemed only waiting for some pretext to commence an affray. On these emergencies, I always adopt one plan, which is, to remove every weapon from the reach of those who were with me. Whitelock and myself alone were armed, and we knew too well the consequences that would accrue from any rash use of weapons, to encounter such a risk. The men were in general small, and had no other clothes than a cloth round their waist. Their complexion was very dark, and they wore their hair long. It was not until some time afterwards that I discovered they were a party under Sayyid ibn Mutluk, whose future proceedings and subsequent defeat I have given in my account of Bedib. Our situation was therefore very precarious, the only chance of escape depending on our firmness and conduct, for they were then marching to attack

a part of the Imám's dominions, and he was the only protection we had.

Old 'Ali, who had an awful opinion of our new acquaintances, declared that he could not sleep; that they were prowling about the tent, and we should inevitably be robbed or murdered before the morning. My interpreter, a Persian, six feet high, and stout in proportion, was so perfectly unmanned by his fears, that he went into fits. There was some ground for his fears, as I believe the Wahhábís have a more thorough detestation of the Persians, as sectaries of 'Ali, than any other class of Mussulmans. When the Sheïkh came and presented me with the letter for the Imám, I knew it would be vain to make any further effort to shake his resolution, and therefore did not attempt it; in the mean time news having spread far and near that two Englishmen, with a box "of dollars," but in reality containing only the few clothes that we carried with us, had halted in the town. The Wahhábís and other tribes had met in deliberation, while the lower classes of the townsfolk were creating noise and confusion. The Sheïkh either had not

the shadow of any influence, or was afraid to exercise it, and his followers evidently wished to share in the plunder. It was time to act. I called 'Ali on one side, told him to make neither noise nor confusion, but to collect the camels without delay. In the mean time we had packed up the tent, the crowd increasing every minute; the camels were ready, and we mounted on them. A leader, or some trifling incident, was now only wanting to furnish them with a pretext for an onset. They followed us with hisses and various other noises, until we got sufficiently clear to push briskly forward; and, beyond a few stones being thrown, we reached the outskirts of the town without further molestation. I had often before heard of the inhospitable character of the inhabitants of this place. The neighbouring Arabs observe that to enter Obrí a man must either go armed to the teeth, or as a beggar with a cloth, and that not of decent quality, round his waist. Thus for a second time end our hopes of reaching Der'ayyah from this quarter; I did not however yet despair, but determined to push on for Síb, embark there, and endeavour, from the port of

Schinás, to cross over to Bireïmah. I had letters to the Wahhábí chief, and if I could only reach him, I had little doubt but that I might in safety continue on to the former town.

Obrí is one of the largest and most populous towns in Omán. Few of its inhabitants, who are of the Yaknah tribe, engage in mercantile pursuits of any kind, confining their bartering to the mere necessaries of life, and living on the produce of their date groves and corn fields. Agricultural pursuits have in other parts of the world a tendency to humanize and soften the character of a people. There they produce no such effects, and where the husbandman endeavours, by an assumed ferocity, to stifle or suppress any softer feeling. I imagine they are urged to this by a desire, when they mix with their Bedowin neighbours, to make up by such display, for the low estimation in which that people not unfrequently regard all those who follow occupations more peaceful than their own.

Indigo, dates, and sugar are their exports, and rice, spices, and white cotton cloth, sent

to be dyed blue, the imports. We passed several enclosures of barley, and towards evening halted near our former encampment at the village of Ayal.

Contrary to Ali's expectations, we got through the night minus only a few trifling articles, which we deserved to lose, because they were left without the tent.

March 14*th*. Nearly the whole of the village, at the instigation of Ali, watched around us last night. I had killed three or four sheep for them, and, either from being too intent on their supper, or from some other cause, a gun, sword, and a few other things were purloined. In our present mode of travelling we could ill spare those articles, and I accordingly represented the matter to the Sheïkh, and he to the elders of the town. After making a great noise, and a furious debate, it was decided the articles should be restored.

When this was resolved on, in order, it would appear, to avert the disgrace and consequent punishment of the offender, who, I have reason to suppose, was a near relation of the Sheïkh's, the latter issued directions

that the articles stolen should be deposited, in the space of half an hour, in a certain obscure part of the grove; and there they were found at the expiration of the appointed time.

CHAPTER XV.

Advice to travellers—Honesty of the Bedowins—Seyyid Hilál—Advises the Author to abandon his enterprise—Sohar—Its commercial importance—Population—Trade—Ahmed ibn Aisan—Defeated by the Wahhábis—His character—Revenue—Harbours of Omán—Asses—Schinas—Villages—Date Groves—Dibah—Description of the Country—Bireïmah—Water—Milk Bush—Goats—Inhabitants.

In a country where the natives are disposed to be hostile, a traveller, if he can possibly avoid it, will do well not to return by his former road. In the first instance he will most probably have passed before they recover from the effects of their surprise, but afterwards he naturally becomes the subject of much conversation and inquiry, and on his return, if disposed for mischief, they look out for him. The events of to-day and yesterday, in addition to many others which oc-

curred previously, convince me of the propriety of these remarks.

On our way to Obrí we passed through Inan without exciting more attention than a gaze of astonishment; but the intelligence of our return had preceded us, and, in consequence, we were received at the entrance of, and followed through the town, by a mob of young men and children, who hooted and pelted us through it. The Sheïkh too, who was formerly all civility, now would not suffer us to proceed without a present, in addition to the one I had already given him for his trouble; nor had I any other alternative, much to my annoyance, than to submit. It is, however, worthy of remark that, with the exception of the few articles at Obrí, this was the first and only time I have lost anything by petty theft or open extortion in Omán.

On the afternoon of March 19th we again reached Suweïk, where Seyyid Hilál received us with all his former kindness. He was much amused, but no way surprised to hear of our reception at Obrí, and his only astonishment appeared to be that we escaped so

well. I found, that having received intelligence of the forward movement of the Wahhábis, he had sent a messenger to recall us, but who missed, and passed us on the road.

The Sheïkh gave me no encouragement to persevere in my attempt to reach Bireïmah.

"However," said he, "if you are desirous of trying the only remaining chance, I will furnish a good boat to convey you to Schinas, and instruct the Sheïkh there to forward you on, with a guard, to Bireïmah."

On the 22nd we therefore embarked for that port, and reached it on the afternoon of the 25th. The coast between these two points presents such a number of towns and villages (all of which will be seen on the map), that I question if it is not among the most populous in the world. The principal, and by far the largest of these is Sohar.

In point of commercial importance, Sohar ranks next to Maskat. It has about forty large bagalás belonging to it, and maintains a considerable trade with Persia on the one hand, and India on the other. The number of inhabitants is estimated at nine thousand; but some of these, residing in contiguous

hamlets, are included in the estimate. Sohar is an ancient town: from its ports the Arabian ships formerly took their departure for China. I find mention made of it in several early authors. To the Portugueze, under the name of Soar, it was well known. In 1829, during the minority of Ahmed Ibn Aisan, the present Sheïkh of this town, the Imâm possessed himself of the government of his district, and, as it is generally thought, intended to retain it, but his design was defeated by the young Sheïkh, who, by stratagem, obtained possession of the fort, and has since successfully held it against several attempts of the Imâm to dislodge him. Peace has been subsequently declared between them; but as the territories of this chief are prolonged in a narrow strip, in a south-east direction, from Sohar to Rosták, through the very heart of the Imâm's dominions, Seyyid S'aïd, it is thought, still views him with a jealous eye, and would seize with avidity any opportunity which might present itself to dispossess him. The government of this district is mild and regular, and similar in its elements to that of Maskat; but the

character of its ruler is bold, reckless, and inconsistent. The Imám, in speaking of him, always styles him the Madman.

There are about twenty families of Jews at Sohar, who have a small synagogue. They are of the same class as those of Yemen, and, like them, subsist by lending money at interest to the people. The Arabs call them "Vad Sarah," the "Children of Sarah," but hold them in great abhorrence. Limes are dried here, and exported in large quantities to the Persian Gulf.

At the period of my visit the Sheïkh was engaged in hostilities with the Wahhábís, who plundered several of his towns, and even compelled him to shut himself up in his fort at Sohar. The Imám, desirous of seeing his power humbled, would neither interfere nor render any assistance; but had his followers possessed resolution equal to that of their chief, the contest would very soon have been decided. The inhabitants of the sea-coast constitute very indifferent warriors, and having made a dash, on their first appearance, into the very centre of the enemy's forces, he found himself deserted by the greater number

of his troops, who were principally composed of this class, and only succeeded in making his escape by the most reckless gallantry: this has since taught him more caution.

It is thought Sheïkh Hilál aspires to the sovereignty of Omán. Many of the Biází sect, for reasons which I have given in another place, are disposed to regard their present Imám as one who has fallen away from the true faith, and Ahmed Aisan trims his sails accordingly. He affects great sanctity, and being endued with the gift of tears, is seen to remain without speaking to any one, weeping for hours. He also aspires to the spirit of prophecy; and flimsy enough as is the veil, has succeeded in creating among many with whom I have conversed the precise feeling he has been desirous to create.

Ahmed ibn Aisan's revenue is derived from the port of Sohar, which yields him annually ten thousand dollars. He also exacts a duty of five thousand dollars from the town of Rosták; but this is not more than one half of the aggregate sum collected by Sayyid S'aid, when in possession of the country, because Ahmed remitted a moiety as a con-

sideration for their acknowledging his authority.

From Maskat to Schinas the coast of Omán is remarkably destitute of harbours, the only shelter the whole line affords being some narrow salt water creeks, or khores, as they are styled by the Arabs, which have only a sufficient depth of water to admit vessels of two feet draught. The inhabitants in consequence possess few boats of larger size than can be accommodated within them, or hauled upon the beach, which, upon the appearance of a north-wester, they most commonly do. In the date season they follow the same plan until they are freighted, and again launched for the purpose of proceeding to their destination. But the communication with the different ports seems more general by land than by water. For this purpose asses and camels are put in requisition; more generally the former. The price of a good ass is from fifteen to thirty dollars: their pace is considerably faster than that of a camel's, the latter being two miles and three quarters, and the former three miles and a half an hour: it is a short, quick trot, which they maintain

throughout the greater part of the day. The asses of Omán are nearly equal to those of Bahráin, and a considerable number are annually shipped off to the Isle of France.

Schinas is but a small town, with a fort and a shallow lagoon, affording anchorage for small boats. It is said to yield to the Imám an annual revenue of three thousand dollars; but that is not more than is sufficient to defray its expenses. During the expedition to Rás el Khaïmah, in 1809, our force, in an attack on the fort, lost several men. Its inhabitants that year had thrown off the Imám's yoke, and, connected with the pirates, infested the entrance of the Gulf for some months. But soon after Rás el Khaïmah fell they returned to his rule, and its fort admitted a party of Belúches soldiers, whom he retains in his pay. I found the Sheïkh absent, and from those he left in charge we could obtain neither answers to our questions nor common civility. However, upon my threatening to leave their port, and represent our reception to the Imám, they became alarmed, and towards the evening I was enabled, by their assistance, to forward the

Imám's letter to Sayyid ibn Mutluk, the Wahhábí chief, who I had every reason to believe was still at Bireïmah; with it I also sent a note, requesting that, if he were willing to receive me, he would, as the intermediate country was in a very unsettled state, send a small force to conduct the party from the sea-coast to his encampment. I employed the time which elapsed after the despatch of our letters in collecting information of, and examining, as far as my means enabled me, the surrounding country, of which I shall now give some description.

There is such an universal sameness in the common features of this part of Omán, that it would be unnecessary and tedious to enter on minute details; I shall therefore give a general outline of the country and its inhabitants, commencing with the sea-coast.

From Schinas to Rás Mussendon, the north-east extremity of Arabia, the Maceto and Acabo of the Greeks, and the Rás el Jebel, or cape of the hills of the Arabs, the general direction of the coast is N. ¼ E.; and throughout the whole distance it is indented with deep bays, coves, and inlets, which be-

come more numerous and more irregular in their outline as they approach the Capé. This indentation is also continued on the western side of the promontory, and a narrow ridge, five hundred yards in width, is all that separates Kasáb Bay on one side, and Goobut Gureï'yah on the other. There are probably few parts of the world presenting an outline so tortuous and irregular as the space included between this isthmus and the Capé.

A succession of villages and date-groves extend from Schinas to Dibha, where the maritime plain (Batna of the Map) commences. At Dibha the Imám has a fort, and he formerly drew from the village a small annual revenue of four thousand dollars. Water, vegetables, and cattle, all good in their several kinds, may be obtained here. It has a few boats, which are employed in bringing grain from the Persian shore. The intermediate parts of Khórfakán and Khór Kulba are similar in size and in the productions they afford to Dibha.

From Dibha to the northward, a range of mountains rise up directly from the sea, exhibiting in many places the most romantic

aspect. The only beach met with is at the extremity of the coves, where a small portion of sand or shing, composed of broken coral or shells, is occasionally found, thrown up by the force of the wind and waves. From the main ridge of mountains, the average height of which is about two thousand five hundred feet, nearly midway between the eastern and western shore of the promontory, several lateral valleys extend towards the sea. Bireïmah may be approached from Schinas by two of these, Wádí Khór and Wádí Uttar. From Fidgira another road leads across the ridge to Shárga, which is two and a half days distant. A few date-groves are reared near the banks of the rivulets, which wind along their beds; but little else is cultivated, and the line of oases, extending from Obrí to Bireïmah, forms the boundary of the cultivation in that part of Omán. From thence to the shores of the Persian Gulf the whole is an arid and sandy waste. Two days' journey from Schinas, a few miles to the southward of Wádí Uttar, on the road to Bireïmah, there is a collection of thirty hamlets, called

Beldán Beni Chab, from the name of the tribe who occupy them. They are in number about one thousand five hundred, and though Wahhábís, are remarkable for the protection which is afforded by them to all who flee there, be their crimes or their faith what they may.

Bearing south from this small district stands the town of Bireïmah, similar in its extent and general features to Bedí'ah: it possesses several hamlets, and is watered by as many streams. There is a fort here, mounting a few small guns, belonging to the Ghafari tribe, who profess the Wahhábí tenets, and refuse to acknowledge the authority of the Imám. The usual number of inhabitants is estimated at two thousand, but, owing to the late influx of the Wahhábís, there were at this season nearly treble that number collected within its precincts. The inhabitants bear the character of being equally wild, and averse to the visits of strangers with those of Obrí. Although the heat of the summer season is very great, the climate of Bireïmah is considered far

superior to any part of Omán, and almost equal to that of Nejd, which is everywhere extolled as the finest in Arabia.

From Dibba to Rás Mussendon, together with that extent of hilly country included within the bifurcation of the main range and the sea, the whole space appears to be barren, and generally destitute of water. That obtained near the sea-coast is indifferent and brackish; and the lonely clumps of palms, which occasionally peep forth from some secluded nook or hollow, when contrasted with the bleak and sombre appearance of the hills, afford, by their verdant hue, a pleasing contrast. A scanty sprinkling of grass in the sandy beds of the valleys, and a few aromatic herbs and shrubs peculiar to the Desert, furnish but indifferent pasturage to the numerous flocks of goats, which are everywhere met with. The *Euphorbia Tirucalla*, or milk bush, is also found here, growing out of the fissures of the rock. Notwithstanding the peculiarly acrid nature of the juice of its leaves, which is sufficient to excoriate any part of the skin on which it may be placed, the goats and camels feed thereon

with impunity. Sheep are scarce. Both roam over the rocks without attendant, yet they are taught to come at call when it is necessary to milk them. The distance to which their owners will make themselves heard on these occasions is very great, and they can maintain without difficulty a distinct conversation across the coves, some of which are half a mile in breadth.

The whole of this district is peopled by a race who speak a dialect differing from that of the tribes in other parts of Omán. They are also remarkable for their extraordinary attachment to their native wilds, and beyond hiring themselves out for a few months in the date harvest, on the Batna coast, and an occasional visit to the Island of Larák, where a small party of them reside to catch and cure fish, they rarely quit their country. They likewise keep aloof from all their neighbours, and I have often inquired for them in the town without success. Before the visit of the surveying vessels they had never seen an European, and they testified as much surprise at the sight of looking-glasses, watches, and other objects of curiosity, as

could have been exhibited by the veriest savage of New Holland. They are mostly very poor, wearing no other covering than a narrow cloth round their waist, which barely serves the purposes of decency. Their habitations are often small circular huts, constructed of loose stones, about four feet high, and usually erected on the strip of sea-beach already mentioned. Other dwellings are found within the space sheltered by some impending rock, the sides and front of which are built up in those spots which require it, but the greater number reside in caves and hollows. On one occasion when the surveying vessel drifted close to the shore, and it was feared she would ground, the hills, which, but a few minutes before, were without a solitary individual, instantly became covered with armed men, who had crawled forth from their caves to share in the expected plunder.

Their principal food is dates and salt fish, rice being nearly unknown to them, but they obtain, occasionally, a small supply of barley and wheat. It has been asserted that this people are of a fairer complexion, and speak

a language distinct from the other inhabitants of the province; but both opinions are incorrect. Those I met with were of a darker hue than the common race of Arabs, and their language differs no more from that used in Omán, than does the dialect of Yemen from that of the Hejas. A colony of Persians formerly settled in Kúmza, and also in Kasáb Bay, where their descendants still remain, and those who have seen them may have originated the supposition.

The number of those who inhabit this rocky wilderness is very considerable,—not less, as far as I could estimate, than fifteen thousand souls. Both the eastern and western shores are lined with villages. The Sheïkh of Kasáb can muster five thousand men under his government: the Sheïkh of Bokh has nearly two thousand, and the chiefs of the other towns in equal proportion. They rear a small quantity of poultry within their dwellings, including a few ducks, which I never recollect seeing in any other part of Arabia.

CHAPTER XVI.

Maritime Robbers—Forbearance of the Indian Government—Instructions to our Cruisers—Audacity of the Pirates—Anecdote—Capture of the Sylph—Massacre—Attack upon the Minerva—Captain attempts to blow up his Vessel—Crew offered up as a Sacrifice to the Prophet—Singular Ceremonies—National traits of Character—Respect for Women—Resolute bravery—Contempt of Death—Expedition against the Pirates—Mohammed Ali—Pirate Vessels—Reparation of Losses—Author engaged in Surveying the Arabian Coast—Additions to Geographical Knowledge—Danger of withdrawing our Squadron—Destruction of a Piratical Boat—Transportation of her Commander—Population—Tribes—Authority of Chiefs—Simplicity of their Domestic Habits.

It remains to notice the pirates, a race hitherto but little known, but whose power and influence was long felt by, and is still intimately connected with the political condition of the tribes in this part of Arabia. They occupy a part of the coast within the Persian Gulf comprehended between the mountain range and the sea-shore, and extending in that direction from Kasáb' to the

Island of Bahrein,—a distance of three hundred and fifty miles. On the map, this portion bears the designation of the Pirate Coast.

The history of these maritime robbers may be traced back to a very remote period. Ibn Haukal, in his version of the Koran, informs us that before the deliverance of the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage, the subjects of a pirate monarch in these parts seized on every valuable ship which passed. The possession of a few ports within and near the entrance of the Persian Gulf, where it is not more than thirty miles across, enabled them to perceive and sally out on all passing vessels. Nor were their depredations confined to this vicinity alone; the whole southern frontier of Arabia, and the northern portion of India, were not exempted from their ravages. To the Portuguese during their brief career in India, they proved quite as troublesome as they did in the latter part of the eighteenth century to ourselves.

With these robbers the Imáms of Maskat have been repeatedly at war. In 1805, Sayyid Sultán, uncle of the present Prince, encountered them near Lingar, and, after a

desperate engagement, was slain. Sayyid Sa'íd has aided us in all our attempts to effect their extirpation.

It is needless now to inquire into the motives which then induced our Indian government so long tamely to suffer the repeated depredations of these marauders. The cause may, perhaps, be attributed to the brawls in which we were then entangled with the various powers in India. But, be that as it may, it is very certain that the Indian navy, constituting a force especially established and maintained for the suppression of piracy, received instructions, in no instance, to become the aggressors, but merely to repel any attack which was made on them. The following anecdote will serve to illustrate the singular relation which then existed between us.

Two Johásmí vessels, lying in Bushir* Roads in the Persian Gulf, stated to the British resident at that place that they were in want of gunpowder, and he, in accordance with his instructions from the Bombay government, to keep on pacific terms with them, directed a cruiser then lying in the harbour

* Properly Abú-sher.

to supply the quantity they required. Hardly had they received it, than, with an audacity which could only be paralleled by the weakness which had furnished them with the means, they commenced an attack upon the identical vessel, which had treasure on board, as she lay at anchor; but, under the charge of a gallant young officer (whose name I regret being unable to supply), she cut her cable, and, after a brave defence, succeeded in beating them off.

I will add two other instances, which exhibit their mode of proceeding when successful in capturing a vessel:—

In 1808, the Sylph, a small ship of only one hundred tons, proceeding with the Persian Secretary from Bombay to Bushir, was attacked, off the island of Kenn, by two large bagalás, each having a crew of upwards of two hundred men. After a short but desperate conflict, the vessel was carried, and the Arabs then commenced a deliberate massacre of the survivors. The work of death, however, was fortunately arrested by the timely appearance of His Majesty's ship Nereid, whose captain, perceiving how affairs stood, immediately fired into, and sunk the baga-

lás, with every soul on board. The other case, out of many which are before me, exhibits in its detail a still more harrowing and revolting picture of savage barbarity.

The Minerva, a merchant ship, proceeding to Bushir, fell in with a large fleet at nearly the same spot, and after a running fight of two days, was carried, according to their usual custom, by boarding. The commander, Captain Hopegood, with the full knowledge of the cruel fate which then awaited him, attempted to blow the vessel up, but unfortunately he failed, and the slaughter of the victims commenced. The ship was first purified with water, and perfumes, and this being accomplished, the different individuals were bound and brought forward singly to the gangway, where one of the pirates cut their throats, with the exclamation they use in slaying cattle, "Alla Akbar" (God is great). They were in fact considered as a propitiatory sacrifice to their prophet. As if to show that even these lawless wretches retained some of those striking peculiarities of national character, which have rendered the Arab an anomaly in

the history of savage nations, some nobler traits were mixed with their unrelenting ferocity. The persons and the virtue of females were always respected, and the contrary behaviour would have brought on them the deepest disgrace and contempt with their own tribes. An unresisting Mohammedan victim, after being stripped and plundered, they very generally spared; but death, or the immediate profession of their creed, awaited the unbeliever. And it is further due to them to acknowledge, that it was only when their vengeance became excited by a defence which cost the lives of many of their companions, that they had recourse to the remorseless measures which I have here described.

The most undaunted bravery was certainly theirs: if taken, they submitted with resignation to the fate they inflicted on others; and when they fell into the hands of the Persians, or other nations by which they are surrounded, they were never spared. After the destruction of one of their forts, several of them were brought on board our ships as prisoners. While uncertain of their fate, and before their wounds were dressed, it was

asked what treatment they anticipated—"The same immediate death as we should have inflicted on you, had your fortune been ours," was the stern and characteristic reply. Few merchant vessels, without the convoy of a ship of war, would now venture to sail between India and the Persian Gulf, while the native boats became subjected to almost certain interception and plunder. The trade in which great numbers of the latter were employed became almost suspended, and the patience or forbearance of Government was at length exhausted.

In 1809, an expedition under Captain Wainwright, in His Majesty's ship Chiffonne, several vessels in the Indian navy, and a detachment of the Bombay army under Colonel Smith, was sent against them. Their principal stronghold, Rás el Khaïmah, was stormed and taken, and fifty of their largest vessels burnt or destroyed. Leït, on the island of Kishm, and several other ports, were reduced; and though this had the effect of checking them for a time, they soon rebuilt these ports, and gradually returned to their old practices.

About this period the success of Mohammed Ali's army in Arabia, and eventually the fall of their capital Der'yyah, compelled a great number of Wahhábís to fly to the sea-coast, where the several tribes had already embraced the faith of their founder. To such restless, turbulent, and daring spirits, the roving and adventurous life of a pirate held forth every charm. It was but transferring the scene of a Bedowin's individual hostility to the rest of mankind, from a desert of sand to a waste of waters; and such numbers consequently joined them that their force soon became truly formidable.

Embarking from their ports in the southern part of the Persian Gulf, in large and swift-sailing vessels, of from two hundred to four hundred tons, of which it is estimated they had then more than a hundred, and sailing together in large fleets, they kept the whole coast of Arabia, the entrance to the Red Sea, and the northern shores of India, in a state of constant excitement and alarm. Many and desperate were the conflicts which occurred at different periods between them and the vessels of the Indian navy, who now pursued

a very different line of conduct to what they had done before. Though often repulsed or defeated, and even in one instance stormed with success in their principal strongholds, yet they never appeared to lose either energy or spirit for any considerable period. New vessels were built or purchased, other forts erected, and after a brief interval they again renewed their outrages.

Events connected with our operations in India against the Mahrattas occupied the attention and resources of Government so completely, that troops could not, without difficulty, for some time, be spared to punish them; but no sooner were these concluded, than their complete extermination was resolved on. The details of the expedition in 1819, are already too well known to render it necessary for me to describe them. I shall merely observe, that when Rás el Khaïmah, Sharja, and the other ports again fell into our hands, all their boats were burnt or sold, and their forts razed to the ground. Certain information was likewise obtained that their fleets had often escaped the vigilance of our cruisers, by taking refuge in the numerous coves with

which this part of the coast of Arabia is indented, and into which the fear of unknown dangers prevented our vessels from following them. When this was communicated to the Indian Government, it was at once resolved that a minute examination should be made of them.

Being employed in this investigation for a considerable period, I had the most favourable opportunities of collecting the information here detailed.

To the expedition science is indebted for those magnificent surveys of the Persian and Arabian Gulfs. Notwithstanding the difficulties and privations they encountered from the perilous nature of the navigation, the jealous and hostile character of the natives, and the still more formidable effects of climate, the heat of which at certain seasons is almost insupportable, the surveying vessels successfully persevered. The result was so satisfactory, not only in adding to our stock of geographical knowledge, but in furnishing the Government with a full account of the several tribes, their condition and resources, that it was subsequently resolved to examine in a

similar manner the whole coast of the Persian Gulf. To confine ourselves, however, to this portion, it was wisely foreseen that, with pirates, as with other thieves, the most effectual way to disperse them was to lay open their haunts. So long as these remained unknown to us, a feeling of imaginary or real security would induce them to follow their former practices; but the circumstance of English ships "writing down" their coast, to use their own descriptive expression, was alone enough to give them an idea that we should possess a perfect knowledge of it.

The result has hitherto justified the anticipation, for the survey was no sooner completed, and a strict system of surveillance established, than their appliances and resources became, as a measure of necessity, turned from piratical to commercial pursuits. Petty quarrels between the boats of rival tribes still occur occasionally; but nearly the whole of their vessels now trade in the Persian Gulf, peaceably from port to port, and from thence to India or the Red Sea. It may indeed be questioned whether, from the very early period when commerce first dawned, and

navigation, in the hands of the Phœnicians, made its infant efforts in the Indian seas, if in this part of Arabia an equal protection has been afforded to the bark of the merchant when sailing along its shores.

There is, however, reason to believe such security will exist no longer than we maintain our present policy towards the Árab chiefs. If our naval squadron was withdrawn from the Gulf for a single season, they would very soon make head again. All their towns have been rebuilt, and are perhaps more extensive than before; and when the treaty of 1819, by which they stipulated to refrain from fighting with each other by sea, had in 1835 expired, they addressed the Indian Government to be permitted to renew their ancient mode of settling differences, many of which during that period had arisen between them. As this was at once known to be merely a pretext for renewing their outrages on their more peaceful neighbours, it was of course refused them. But a few months before, a piratical boat fitted out by the Benî As tribe, seized and plundered an Indian vessel proceeding to Bushir, but was encountered

some days afterwards by the Honorable Company's sloop of war, Elphinstone. Nowise daunted, the pirates awaited her approach, prepared for boarding; and it was not until they received a broadside of round and grape from the sloop's 32-pounders through their flimsy sides, that they became aware of the power of the foe they had defied. As they were but a few yards from each other, the slaughter was very great. The commander of the Arab vessel was subsequently taken to India, tried there in the Supreme Court, and sentenced to fourteen years' transportation. The first part of this affair was intelligible enough to the several tribes along the coast, for we had no repetition of such attempts; but the sentence, which was carried into effect, puzzled them sorely; and during my travels I was repeatedly warned not to venture near to or within the territories of this tribe, as they had threatened to retaliate, by boiling in oil, the first European they could lay hands on.

Here, as in other parts of Arabia, I have found great difficulty in ascertaining the amount of the population. Little reliance

can be placed on the testimony of the chiefs, who are ever desirous of enhancing the power of their own, and depreciating that of other tribes; while, from their maritime pursuits, and their connexion with the pearl fishery, the amount of actual residents is constantly fluctuating. The number of their huts affords no surer guide, for, being built of the branches of the date palm with little trouble, when old and damaged by the wind, they are often deserted and left standing. The mean of my several inquiries induces me to fix their number at twenty thousand, exclusive of women and children. The principal tribes are the Johásmí, Menasír, Bení As, and Mahámа: the former is the most powerful. They not only possess all the chief ports of the Arabian coast, but have also established themselves on the Persian shore, where they have several large towns and flourishing villages. Their name is derived from a Saint Johásmí, who resided on a low tongue of land, and the tents of his followers, which were pitched around, gave the name of Rás el Khaïmah, or "Cape of Tents," to the promontory on which a town bearing the same designation

was subsequently erected. The Johásmis very soon after its promulgation embraced the tenets of the Wahhábis, with whom they were always in strict alliance, and to this cause we are to attribute the bitter hatred of the Princes of Omán. Their present chief is considered to be wily and politic. In their peculiar mode of warfare he possesses great abilities, but is otherwise deficient in that boldness and frankness which characterises the Arab. His capital, Rás el Khaimah, was wholly dismantled in 1819, but is now rebuilt, and, perhaps, of greater magnitude, and more populous than before. If our ships, therefore, were not kept in constant communication with him, there is little doubt, both from his ability and disposition, that he would occasion us some trouble.

The tribe next in importance to the Johásmí is that of Benú Ás. Its late Sheïkh, Tamún, was an enterprising character, who possessed considerable power; and maintained a regular force of four hundred men, very well armed and equipped. Small as this number may appear, it was sufficient to give him considerable influence over his rivals, although

the number of troops he could otherwise bring into the field was estimated at four thousand only. When the Imám, in 1829, undertook an expedition against the Island of Bahrein, he endeavoured, by the payment of a considerable sum of money, to secure the co-operation of Tanún; but when the hour of attack arrived, his lukewarmness was so apparent, that it is to this day believed he also received a bribe from the other side.

The surveying vessels, in 1828, received much attention from this chief, who was very fond, during their intercourse with him, of engaging in the several games with which the officers and men passed away their leisure hours, and equally happy if they would share in those of his own people. On these occasions the most perfect good humour existed. One day, an officer had been matched to run on foot against Tanún, who was in person rather short, but very active, and with abundant vivacity, and love of amusement. For some time after they had started the officer held the lead, but finding, as he approached the goal, that the longer-winded little Sheïkh was about to pass him, he threw

himself headlong before his path. Over flew Tanún, amidst shouts of laughter from his tribe; but, nowise disconcerted or annoyed, the Sheïkh arose, and, after joining most heartily in their mirth, congratulated his opponent on the success of his stratagem. In wrestling, leaping, and other athletic exercises, his Arabs generally were equally matched with, and, not unfrequently, had a decided advantage over our Europeans.

The authority exercised by these chiefs differs but little from that of the Sheïkh government on which I have hereinafter touched. From the fierce and turbulent character of those they govern, their power is necessarily of a somewhat despotic nature, yet, in adjusting broils, and in matters connected with the general interest of the tribe, the opinion of their old men has great weight. The direct interference of the Sheïkh is, in fact, neither sought nor often called for; and the tribe is ruled without the aid of frequent punishments; for, when its relations are so simple and so well understood as in Arabia, offences against the good order of society rarely occur. In their diet and mode of living these chiefs

preserve the same simplicity as the Bedowin Sheïkhs; a fact the more extraordinary, since they are not in the same manner shut up in a desert, but in constant communication with Indians, Persians, &c., and having more wealth and power, would experience no difficulty in supplying themselves with foreign luxuries. It follows then, that this self-dĕnial, whilst retaining the national manners, must be considered as purely voluntary.

While cruising on this coast in 1827, I was proceeding with dispatches to the Sheïkh of Sharja, Sultan Ibn Suggar, when a strong breeze unexpectedly set in, and raised so heavy a swell on the bar, that our boat, in attempting to cross it, was capsized. This occurred some distance from the land, but, all being good swimmers, we reached it without much difficulty, and with no other inconvenience than a thorough drenching. After landing, the gale increased, and for three days we could not attempt to put off to the vessel. I had then some opportunity of studying the private character of the people, as well as that of their rulers. Sultan was unremitting in his attention to me, a meal being

every day prepared at, and sent from his house. On one occasion he invited me to dine and pass the evening with him. I was received in a small room, furnished with only a rude table; two or three chairs, given him by the commanders of our vessels, and some carpets, on which, after I had declined the honour of the chairs, we all seated ourselves. Our dinner was, as usual, of the most frugal description, and, after its removal, the Sheïkh's brother roasted and pounded the coffee, which the Sheïkh himself made and handed round. A story-teller was then called in, whose tale, judging from the peals of laughter he drew from his hearers, must have possessed much entertainment; but I was then too ignorant of the language to understand it.

CHAPTER XVII.

Personal appearance of the Natives of the Pirate Coast—Pearl Fishery—Divers—Boats employed—Pearl Oysters—Expedient for retaining the Breath—Cruising on Pearl Banks—Atmospheric Heat—Effects on Europeans—Arab Swimmers—Anecdote of an Arab Diver—Diving for Fish—Sayyid ibn Mutluk—Advance of the Wahhábis—Termination of my Journey—Peculiar features of Omán—Oases.

THE inhabitants of the Pirate Coast consider themselves to be far superior to either the Bedowins or town Arabs. The latter, especially those from Omán, they hold in such contempt, that a Maskatti and an arrant coward are by them held to be nearly synonymous. They are taller, fairer, and, in general, more muscular than either of the above classes, until they attain the age of thirty or forty years, when they acquire a similar patriarchal appearance. Until this period some of their forms are perfect models of strength, and their development of muscle

greater than that of any other Asiatic people with whom I am acquainted. Although by no means fond of exertion, when it can be avoided, yet, in cases positively requiring it, the manner in which they combine individual efforts is truly astonishing, their largest barks, of three hundred tons, being drawn by sheer physical strength above high water mark with no other assistance than rollers. Whenever our boats required to be launched, or hauled over flats, they were always happy to assist, in order that they might laugh at the puny efforts of the Lascars, for to save the Europeans in hot weather that class were not unfrequently employed in such operations.

When not at feud with any of their neighbours their time is devoted to fishing, diving for pearls, or passed in complete idleness, for the north-westerly gales which prevail throughout the greater part of the year in this gulf prevent them, during its continuance, from putting to sea, and their supply is then obtained from the creeks and inlets which intersect its shores. The pearl fishery only lasts from June to September,

for at other periods they complain that the cold is too severe. During the season every person who can procure a boat himself, or obtain a share in one, is thus employed, and their villages have no other occupants than children, females, and men who are too aged to follow this pursuit.

The pearl bank extends from Sharjá to Biddulph's Group. The bottom is of shelly sand and broken coral, and the depths vary from five to fifteen fathoms. The right of fishing on the bank is common, but altercations between rival tribes are not unfrequent. Should the presence of a vessel of war prevent them from settling these disputes on the spot, they are generally decided on the islands where they land to open their oysters. In order to check such quarrels, which, if permitted, would lead to general confusion, two government vessels are usually cruising on the bank.

Their boats are of various sizes, and of varied construction, averaging from ten to fifty tons. During one season it is computed that the island of Bahreïn furnishes, of all sizes, three thousand five hundred; the Persian coast,

one hundred; and the space between Bahreïn and the entrance of the Gulf, including the Pirate Coast, seven hundred. The value of the pearls obtained at these several ports is estimated at forty lacs of dollars, or four hundred thousand pounds. Their boats carry a crew varying from eight to forty men, and the number of mariners thus employed at the height of the season is rather above thirty thousand. None receive any definite wages, but each has a share of the profits upon the whole. A small tax is also levied on each boat by the Sheïkh of the port to which it belongs. During this period they live on dates and fish, of which the latter are numerous and good, and to such meagre diet our small presents of rice were a most welcome addition. Where polypi abound they envelop themselves in a white garment; but in general, with the exception of a cloth around their waist, they are perfectly naked. When about to proceed to business they divide themselves into two parties, one of which remains in the boat to haul up the others who are engaged in diving. The latter having provided themselves with a small basket, jump overboard, and place their feet on a stone, to which a

line is attached. Upon a given signal this is let go, and they sink with it to the bottom. When the oysters are thickly clustered, eight or ten may be procured at each descent; the line is then jerked, and the person stationed in the boat hauls the diver up with as much rapidity as possible. The period during which they can remain under water has been much overrated; one minute is the average, and I never knew them, but on one occasion, to exceed a minute and a half*.

Accidents do not very frequently occur from sharks, but the sawfish (the Antiguorum of Linnæus) is much dreaded. Instances were related to me where the divers had been completely cut in two by these monsters, which attain, in the Persian Gulf, a far larger size than in any other part of the world where I have met with them. As the character of this fish may not be familiar to the general reader, I will add a few words in the way of description. They are of an oblong rounded form, their head being somewhat flattened from the

* This was in the presence of the British Resident, Col. Stannus. One man of some hundreds present, for a reward of a few dollars, remained one minute and fifty seconds. In Ceylon they rarely exceed fifty seconds.

fore-part, and tapering more abruptly towards the tail. They usually measure from thirteen to fifteen feet in length, being covered with a coriaceous skin, of a dark colour above, but white beneath. The terrific weapon from whence they derive their name is a flat projecting snout, six feet in length, four inches in breadth, armed on either side with spines resembling the teeth of a shark.

Diving is considered very detrimental to health, and without doubt it shortens the life of those who much practise it. In order to aid the retention of the breath, the diver places a piece of elastic horn over his nostrils, which binds them closely together. He does not enter the boat each time he rises to the surface, ropes being attached to the side, to which he clings, until he has obtained breath for another attempt. As soon as the fishermen have filled their boats they proceed to some of the islands with which the bank is studded, and there with masts, oars, and sails, construct tents. They estimate the unopened oysters at two dollars a hundred *.

* Of the several duties assigned to the Indian navy, that of cruising on the Pearl Banks is by far the most harassing and unpleasant. It is admitted by those who are well qualified to judge,

Familiar with water from their youth, the natives are very expert, and the time they will remain upon it, as well as the distance they can swim, would sound incredible to European ears. There are well-attested cases of individuals who, without rest, have swam more than seven miles.

In 1827 we were cruising in the Honourable Company's sloop Ternate on the Pearl Banks. Whilst becalmed, and drifting slowly along with the current, several of the officers and men were looking over her side at our Arab pilot, who had been amusing himself in diving for oysters. After several attempts, his

that the heat of the atmosphere in the Persian Gulf during the warm season is not surpassed by any other spot in the known world. The nights being short, neither earth nor sea has time to cool. Even when on the horizon, the sun is sufficiently warm to be disagreeable: the sailors say it rises red hot; and a few minutes afterwards the intensity of its beams elevates Fahrenheit's thermometer ten degrees. From this period until about eleven in the forenoon, when the sea-breeze sets in, the heat is almost intolerable. Under double awnings, their heads not unfrequently bound with wet cloths, the seamen are seen lying on the deck, or stretched along the gun-whale, looking for the first welcome indication of the breeze, absolutely panting for breath. Without the smallest exertion, a copious perspiration streams from every pore. Water increases, instead of allaying thirst; the skin is in such a state from irritation, that no clothes can be endured, and the slightest movement, by causing it to crack, is accompanied with great pain.

search proved unsuccessful. "I will now," said he, "since I cannot gather oysters, dive for and catch fish." All ridiculed the idea. He went down again, and great was our astonishment to see him, after a short time, rise to the surface with a small rock-fish in either hand. His own explanation of the feat was, that as he seated himself at the bottom, the fish came around and nibbled at his skin. Watching an opportunity, he seized and secured his prey by thrusting his thumb and fore-finger into their expanded gills.

Tuesday, March 28th. Intelligence of Sayyid ibn Mutluk's advance on Bedí'ah, the details of which I have given in my account of that district, reached me this morning, and completely annihilated all hopes of being able, through his means, of reaching Der'ayyah. At the same time I also learnt that the Imám had despatched messengers who, not finding us at Bireïmah, as was expected, had gone on to Obrí.

As it therefore became necessary that I should now forego all present intentions of advancing further into the country, I determined to pass the few remaining days of the

fair season on the Macran coast, where, although a maritime survey, conducted at a considerable expense, has fixed the geographical positions of the towns, every species of information connected with its inhabitants &c., is wanting.

The general observations which follow embrace the several subjects which I have not embodied in the foregoing narrative.

I have not found it an easier task to fix the limits of this province, than I before experienced in ascertaining those of Hydramáut and Yemen. Under the denomination of Omán, some geographers comprehend all that tract which is encompassed by the provinces of Hydramáut, Lahsa, and Nejd: To the natives of the country, however, such a division is now unknown; and in speaking of Omán they merely refer to the space between the districts of Ja'ilan and Batna. Where inquiries or research would produce in either instance no very satisfactory results, in my delineation of the province I have adopted the plan which appeared most natural, and consider that only as Omán which, in its general features, differs most prominently

from the country by which it is surrounded, and which acknowledges the sovereignty of the reigning prince of Omán, though in some instances by a tie so slight, as scarcely to deserve the name.

Omán thus considered, may be described as a narrow strip of land of irregular width, never exceeding one hundred and fifty miles in its broadest part. It is bounded on the east by the Indian Ocean, on the west by extensive deserts, and extends in a direct line from the island of Mazeira, in latitude 20° 48′, and longitude 58° 56′, nearly four hundred miles, to Ras, or Cape Mussendom, in latitude 26° 24′, and longitude 56° 39′, where it terminates in the form of an acute angle.

By the natives of the country this part of Arabia is subdivided into four districts:— 1st, Jaïlan, comprehending Benì Abú 'Ali, and all that tract of country to the south-east of Bedí'ah; 2ndly, Omán from Bedí'ah, north-west to Makiniyát; 3rdly, Dhorrah, from Makiniyát to Bireïmah; and 4thly, Batna, extending in a narrow strip along shore, from Síb to Khórfakán. The general fea-

tures and outlines of the province may be thus laid down. A range of mountains, forming a part of the great chain which almost encircles Arabia, traverses, in a direction nearly parallel to the shore, the whole extent of the province from Maskat to Súr. The hills take their rise close to the beach, but to the north of that port they retire considerably from it.

In latitude 23°, a second range, the Jebel Akhdar, or Green Mountains, still more elevated, run in a direction nearly transverse to the former; low parallel ridges, forming the roots of either branch, extending to a considerable distance from them. From the Jebel Akhdar the chain continues to Ras Musendom, throwing off in its course another branch or arm, which extends to Rás al Khaïmah, on the shores of the Persian Gulf. The space included within this bifurcation and the sea is broken into piles of mountains, which are singularly disposed and of various elevations; the width of the chain does not in general exceed twelve or fifteen miles, and the average height of the central or most elevated hills is from three thousand to three

housand five hundred feet. Some of the highest points of the Jebel Akhdar rise, however, nearly six thousand feet above the level of the sea. With the exception of this range, they are unwooded and barren. Feldspar and mica slate enter most commonly into the formation of the lower ranges, and primitive limestone into the upper.

By referring to the map and narrative it will be seen, that from Benì Abú 'Alì to Neswah, I traversed a line of oases, and that the space between them and the mountains on the sea-shore presents nothing but arid plains, destitute of either towns or villages. To the northward of Sìb, the width of the Tehama or maritime plain (the Batna of the map) is from twenty to forty miles. It rises with a slight but gradual ascent from the sea to the base of the principal chain, and although not crossed by any of the rivers which appear on our maps, it has nevertheless some very considerable streams, which continue for the greater part of the year to pour their waters into the sea*. Beyond, or to the westward

* There are, I am told, two exceptions, viz., the stream near to Ras or Cape Kuriat, and that at Sìb, along the bed of which lies the road to Neswah.

of the mountains in the northern districts, few towns or fertile spots occur, and in some instances the margin of the Desert is but a few miles removed from them. From the summit of the Jebel Akhdar I had an opportunity, during a clear day, to obtain an extensive view of the Desert to the south-west of Omán. Vast plains of loose drift-sand, across which even the hardy Bedowín scarcely dares to venture, spread out as far as the eye can reach. Not a hill nor even a change of colouring in the plains occur, to break the unvarying and desolate appearance of the scene.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Soil and Agriculture—its general character—Batna — Grain, Vegetables—Cultivation on banks of Streams — Description of the Oases—Irrigation—Subterranean Rivulets—Harvest—Seed-time — Soil of the Jebel Akhdar — Terraced Gardens—Progress of Agriculture — Crops — Wells — Mode of raising Water—Egyptian method — Implements of Husbandry—Remarkable mode of Irrigation — Scriptural allusion — Arab Reapers—Trees, Plants, &c.

Omán may, therefore, be described as a desert thickly studded with oases, and containing amidst its mountains numerous fertile valleys; yet many of these are at a considerable distance from each other, and it must be admitted that the quantity of cultivated land bears but a small proportion to that which is incorrigibly barren; for the intermediate space between the oases to the westward and the great sandy Desert is an arid plain, either sandy or clayey, according as the aluminous or silicious particles prevail. A few succu-

lent herbs, which are nourished by the nightly dews, and afford but indifferent grazing to their scanty flocks, spring up here; but the large tracks occupied by the beds of the streams have generally a layer of rounded masses of limestone, brought from the mountains, deposited on their surface, and are wholly destitute of every species of vegetation, save some dwarfish bushes on which the camel alone feeds. The soil in the Tehama, in some spots, is hard and of a bad quality, but in others, whenever water can be conveyed, it is in a high degree susceptible of cultivation. In the narrow belt bordering on the sea-shore, called Batna, large quantities of grain and vegetables are reared, and a continuous line of date-trees, often four or five miles in breadth, extends from Síb to Khórfakán a distance of nearly two hundred miles. Reference is repeatedly made in the 'Arabian authors to the palms of Omán. Much cultivation exists along the banks of the streams, and also in the vicinity of the towns. But the most remarkable feature in this country are the oases, which extend from Bení Abú 'Alí, in a continuous line, to the

west-north-west. They are usually of an oblong form, lying at right angles to the streams by which they are supplied. Their size varies from a circumference of seven or eight miles to one, or even less. The singular and laborious mode by which the natives convey water to them, I have already noticed in my account of the oases of Bedi'ah.

For the purpose of obtaining a better soil, and facilitating irrigation, the Arabs have removed the earth to the depth of six or seven feet, and they flood the whole or any part at pleasure. Some of these streams are public property, others belong to individuals or to companies. At a place called Om Taïef, near to Maskat, the Imám constructed a falj at a cost of forty thousand dollars; but the water proved so brackish that they were forced to abandon it. An estate in North Omán, where these subterranean rivulets are very scarce, derives its value from its situation with regard to them. Some of the minor rills are exhausted, or their water is greatly diminished in the dry season, and the ground is then irrigated from the main streams. At Nakhl, near to

Burka, four hundred dollars were paid for a supply of one hour every fifteen days, and, as they have no watches, they have recourse to the stars, with the precise time of the rising and setting of some few of which they are well acquainted.

Water, it is well known, in a tropical climate gives an almost unlimited fertility to the soil. In the oases it is always saturated with moisture, and the leaves and other vegetable matter, decaying almost as soon as they are deposited, but little manure is required. Much of the cultivation is carried on beneath the trees, but open spaces are also left for grain or sugar-cane, which require the sun's rays to ripen them. Wheat is sown in the latter part of October, and reaped at the commencement or middle of March. Where they have the means of constant irrigation, the ground produces one crop of wheat and two of dhurrah. Barley is sown a month after wheat. No rice is grown in Omán; and so far from any export of wheat existing, the natives have not a sufficiency for their own consumption, and import large quantities from Persia and Macran. In the oases

wheat yields an increase from fifteen to twenty fold: barley nearly the same: dhurrah (*Holcus Sorghum*) from thirty to forty fold. The singular appearance which these groves present during the various stages of their vegetable produce, I have noticed elsewhere.

From the elevated position of the Jebel Akhdar, many of the valleys formed by the upper ranges differ from the plains below, both in their soil and mode of cultivation. The ground there is usually terraced, as in Palestine and China, and produces a great variety of trees and fruits not reared in other parts.

Agriculture has made but small progress in Omán. It has been already noticed that the prolific soil of the oases requires but small assistance; for where men fear nothing from the vicissitudes of the season, little management in the process of husbandry is required. But on the arable land in the open plains, where the earth, though of indifferent quality, is yet susceptible of considerable improvement, the natives bestow neither labour nor expense to remedy the defect. I must, however, except the country in the vicinity of Minná and Neswah, which, in place of barren

and neglected wastes but partially tilled, by which other towns are disfigured, exhibit extensive ranges of sown fields, rich in every kind of vegetable production.

The crops in the plains depend in some measure on the rains, although many parts are irrigated from wells, some of which are of considerable depth. It is singular, considering the pains which have been bestowed on the rivulets by which the oases are supplied, that the inhabitants should not seek by mechanical means to abridge the labour which this process entails. Here, as in India, two pieces of timber, generally the trunk of a date-palm, are planted with sufficient inclination to plumb the centre of the well. Across a roller, affixed in the upper part of these, a bucket-rope traverses, the bucket being usually a bullock's hide, gathered up into the shape of a bag, with a hose at the lower part: to the extremity of this a small cord is attached, leading over a roller about two feet above the brink of the well. Bullocks are used for drawing the water; and in order to add the impetus of the animal to its strength, he is driven down a slope excavated

for the purpose, at an angle of fifteen degrees. Both ropes are affixed to the yoke, and by the time the water is swayed sufficiently high, that made fast to the hose which has hitherto been kept in a vertical position, becomes tightened, drawing the mouth of the hose downwards, and the water is then discharged into a narrow reservoir.

When the wells are sufficiently shallow they practise the same method as is adopted by the Egyptians on the banks of the Nile. A pole being suspended in the middle between two supporters, the bucket is attached to one extremity, and a stone or some heavy article to the other: its weight assists the peasant, who sways on the rope attached to it. From the reservoir the water is conducted, by artificial rills, over the face of the surrounding country.

Their implements of husbandry are rude and ill constructed. The plough is of the same description as that of Yemen, which will be found figured by Niebuhr. After ploughing, they form the ground with a spade into small squares with ledges on either side, along which the water is conducted. Be-

sides preventing its spreading, these embankments also serve to retain the moisture on the surface for a longer period. When one of the hollows is filled, the peasant stops the supply by turning up the earth with his foot, and thus opens a channel into another *.

Within these inclosures they cast the seed by hand into narrow furrows, and afterwards cover it over, leaving the whole a plain surface. By this mode they effect a considerable saving of the seed, which can neither decay from exposure to the atmosphere, nor be carried off by the birds. Their corn is reaped with a small sickle of a semi-lunar shape, and notched like a saw. The man who reaps hands the sheaf to another, by whom it is formed, bound, and laid in a line parallel to that which his companion is clearing away. These are afterwards collected together, and a stone of considerable size is drawn over them by two oxen. In other

* An allusion to this custom, of the gardener changing *with his foot* the channel of a stream of water, furnishes the King of Assyria, in his threatening message, with a very appropriate image, "With the *sole of my foot*," says he, "I have dried up the rivers of besieged places." The practice of Arabia is also familiar to the modern Portuguese husbandman.

parts a circular space, about twenty feet in diameter, is inclosed by a wall. To a stake in the centre a bullock is fastened by a yoke of peculiar construction, and he is driven round and round until the corn is trodden out in his progress. It is afterwards winnowed by means of palm branches, one of the party following and occasionally turning the sheaves with a rake. I was pleased on these occasions to observe that here, as in Palestine and other parts of the East, the ox was left unmuzzled.

Over the surface of the greater part of the intervening desert between the oases trees and bushes appear but thinly scattered. Some spaces are wholly destitute of them, but extensive tracts through which I passed, in the vicinity of Beni Abú 'Alí, are thickly wooded with lofty acacias. The largest of these are called by the Arabs goff (*Acacia Arabica*), and sumr (*Acacia Vera*). A gum exudes from both; the true gum Arabic, however, is only obtained from the latter, although the produce of the former, of inferior quality, is not unfrequently substituted for it. These trees are used for making charcoal, and me-

dicinal properties are attributed to the bark of the *Acacia Arabica*. The wood is also made into agricultural implements, the stocks of matchlocks, and other articles requiring excessive hardness. No timber fit for building is found in Omán, the trunk of the date-palm, commonly used in erecting their houses, scarcely deserving that appellation, since it is weak, and very soon decays.

Tarfa, or tamarisk bushes (*Tamarix Orientalis*) are numerous. Camels feed greedily on their tender branches and leaves, which the Bedowins collect by beating the trees with sticks, and receiving what falls upon a cloth spread beneath them. On the Jebel Akhdar there are, as I have noticed in the course of the Narrative, many indigenous trees not found in the plains. In some of the channels through which water has passed, lofty tamarind, nebek (*Lotus Nebea*), and hithel trees have taken root, notwithstanding the rocky nature of their bed; but, generally speaking, the summits and slopes of the mountains are unwooded and barren. Tamarind trees also grow most luxuriantly on some of the plains. They are large, wide-

spreading, beautiful trees, but the people of Omán, like the natives of Hindostan, entertain a belief that it is dangerous to sleep beneath them, especially at night.

In Omán I never met with either frankincense or dragon's-blood trees, although they are very numerous on the hills in the neighbouring province of Hydrámaut. The Arabs report that they are not found to the westward of the Mahara district. On the borders of the streams aloes are very numerous. In the distribution of its leaves and its average height, the plant which is called by the Arabs succul is the same as the aloe spiccata, found in Socotra, and on the coast of Arabia Felix; but it is of a sea-green, instead of a light-brown colour; very succulent, and not so deeply serrated. I have seen a variety closely resembling this in India and Egypt, but am not aware that botanists have classed it. The natives collect a small quantity of the juice, but being of a more acrid taste than the better sort, it is not held in much esteem, and none is in consequence exported. Cassia lanceoletta, senna meakí (the sharp-pointed senna of Forskal) is found growing in great

abundance in Omán, but the natives employ it very sparingly in their medicines. Many colocynth plants (*Cucumus colocynthis* of Linnæus) are found in the vicinity of Bedi'ah, and also along the sea-coast. The melon, called by the Arabs hungil, is found in some places strewn over the ground in great profusion. Several bushes of the milk-hedges (*Euphorbia tiraculla*) are found amidst the mountains; and notwithstanding the peculiar acrid nature of its juice, which is sufficient to inflame and blister the skin, the goats eat the plants with impunity. Rice (*Reta graveolus*), Abysinthium, wild lavender, and many aromatic shrubs and plants are also seen: of these a large collection was made, but being of no utility to man and of little interest to the general reader, they are but slightly noticed here. The champer flower (*Michaelis champaca*) and the Arabian jessamine are cultivated for the sake of their perfume, which is in great request with the females. In north Omán two varieties of sorrel are found, of which the Bedowins, who consider them as a mild laxative, are very fond. Water-cresses grow on the borders of the streams; the Arabs

use their seed for medicinal purposes. In the interior of the province all the oases, as well as the cultivated lands in the vicinity of its towns, are alike productive, and the following list applies to them collectively; but many of the fruits are not found in gardens near the sea-coast. I may be pardoned the dry detail of such a catalogue, since it will convey, better than any lengthened description, an idea of the natural productions of a country hitherto regarded as a desert. Nor must it be forgotten that all contained in this list, amounting to twenty different kinds, are often reared in a space not more than three or four hundred yards in diameter.

CHAPTER XIX.

Fruits of Omán—Oranges—Limes—Lemons—Introduction of the Lemon-tree into Europe—Tamarinds—Mangoes—Beauty of the Mangoe tree—Grapes—Wine—Plantains—Pumpkins—Figs, inferior to those of Turkey—Dates—Seed of Male Palm—Grain—Vegetables, &c.—Wild Beasts—The Imám's Camel—Description—Food of the Camel—Value—Rate of Travelling—Burckhardt—Volney—Captain Burnes—Author's experience of Camel Travelling—Housings—Illustrations of Scriptural Quotations—Author in danger of being Shot—Imám's Horses—Value—Studs of Burka and Suweïh—Asses, their sureness of Foot—Buffaloes—Oxen—Poultry—Birds—Bedowin Sportsmen—Fish—Climate—Diseases—Arab Physicians—Meteorology—Geological Features.

Of oranges, limes*, and lemons there are several varieties. Respecting the first, it may be sufficient to mention the sweet orange (*Citrus cinensis*); the Mandarine orange, so called in China and India; and a third sort, remarkable for the thinness and bright-yellow colour of its skin, and its superior

* Large quantities of limes are dried in the sun, and exported to the Persian Gulf.

flavour. Of limes, there are the *Citrus acida*, and three or four other species, also well known in India by the designation of sweet limes. Lemons are scarce and small; but the citron attains a very large size. The lemon-tree is said to be a native of Persia; but from its Arabian name, Límón, it would appear to have been brought to Europe by the Arabs. From the juice of limes, they make sherbet, a very cooling beverage, drank in large quantities during febrile disorders. Of tamarinds and mangoes there are also several kinds, differing considerably in size, flavour, and appearance; but the best are considered inferior to those obtained in India. In the spring, when this tree puts forth its blossom, the whole of its foliage appears of a golden hue, which, with its wide-spreading branches, and umbrageous foliage, entitles it to rank as the most noble among the vegetable productions of the oases. Quinces (*Pyrus cydoma* and *Pyrus malus*) are found on the Jebel Akhdar—the latter on the plains. A considerable quantity of this fruit is shipped off to India. Custard apples, *Anana reticulata*. Grapes are ro-

principally in the Jebel Akhdar, one of a white, and the other of a dark-purple colour; the former are used for wine, and from the latter they make raisins. Plantains also, of various sorts. Water melons, and pumpkins, all plentiful and good in their several kinds. Almonds, walnuts, figs, several varieties; the best, called Tím (*Ficus carica*, Linn.), are sweet and pleasant, but smaller, and inferior in richness and flavour to those of Turkey. The natives dry and string them on lines. Nebek, the fruit of the *Lotus nebca*. Dates. These form the principal, and often, particularly in travelling, the only food of the natives. Omán produces vast quantities. I have already noticed the extensive groves on the Batna coast. The best kind here are considered scarcely inferior to those of Basrah and Bahreïn, esteemed the best in Arabia. The natives are very fond of the seed of the male palm; it has a slight odoriferous smell, but its taste, I thought, could only be relished from habit. White and jowaree grain (*Holcus sorghum*), wheat, and barley, are grown, but little rice. The vegetables are onions, lentils, radishes, carrots, brin-

jals (the egg plant), parsley, several kinds of beans, peas, cucumbers, sweet potatoes, lettuces, and some greens, which, when boiled, taste not unlike our garden spinach. Potatoes have not been introduced; the semsem, or Sesamum orientale, is grown in large quantities; from the seed an oil is expressed, which is much esteemed by the Arabs. They sometimes toast the seed, and make it into bread. To these we may add indigo, the cotton bush (*Gossypium herbareum*), the castor-oil tree, and extensive fields of sugar-cane. Hemp is reared, but not manufactured; but its seeds form one of their natural inebrients.

The wild animals of Omán nearly resemble those common to other parts of Arabia. On the plains, jackals, foxes, hares, antelopes, and jerboas, the mus jaculus, are very numerous; hyænas are only found near the mountains, where they shelter themselves in caves and hollows. Wild hogs, goats, and a description of small panther, are met with on the Jebel Akhdar.

Camels in all parts of Arabia are esteemed a gift of inestimable value, and those of Omán enjoy a deserved celebrity for strength and

swiftness. Nejd is equally the nursery of the camel as of the horse; but the Omány in all ages is celebrated in the songs of the Arabs as the fleetest; their legs are more slender and straight, their eyes more prominent and sparkling, and their whole appearance denotes them of higher lineage than the ordinary breed of the animal. Anecdotes are told of two which the Imám formerly possessed, that appear almost incredible. I have heard it asserted by those on whose testimony I should place every reliance, that one of these favourite dromedaries carried a courier from Síb to Sohar, an ordinary journey of six days, in thirty-six hours. Considering such frequent mention has been made of the camel from the earliest period, it is singular we possess no correct or even detailed information respecting its habits, character, or general appearance. I am not acquainted with a single illustrated zoological work which affords even a tolerable representation of one.

The silence of travellers, in reference to an animal to which all have been so much indebted, may be accounted for on the supposition that each individual conceived the sub

ject too important to have escaped his predecessors and naturalists in general, as in truth it appears to have done.

The following remarks, in addition to other scattered notices found in these travels, differ in many respects from received opinions; but very favourable opportunities of studying the subject enable me to submit them with confidence; and in other respects, that which is new may serve to supply a deficiency in the natural history of the most useful animal which the bounty of the Creator has bestowed on man.

All the camel's habits and instincts are adapted to its singular condition and the region which he inhabits. Let us contemplate the creature from the moment of its birth. Should this happen on a journey, the Bedowin* receives it in his arms, and for a few hours places it on the mother's back; but at the first halting-place, the little stranger is put down to receive the parent's caresses, and ever after continues, unassisted, to follow her footsteps.

* He is joyously welcomed with the exclamation, "Another child is born unto us."

Thus accustomed from its earliest age to long and toilsome journeys, little training is necessary, beyond proportioning the weight to its tender age, to inure them to the carrying of burthens; and they voluntarily kneel when about to be loaded for a journey, a position which their great height renders necessary. Kneeling is their natural state of rest; but when heavily laden on flinty or stony ground, it cannot be accomplished without pain. They then drop at once on both front knees, and in order to establish room for their hinder legs, are compelled in that condition, and whilst encumbered with the whole weight of the burthen, to plough them forward. The callosities on their joints, although nearly of a horny nature in the aged camels, seem insufficient to defend them, and it is impossible for the European to view the act without commiseration.

In consequence of this the Bedowins never make them kneel to mount themselves, but either cause the animal to droop his neck to receive their foot, and on their raising it the rider is enabled to gain his seat, or they climb up behind: it pleases them much

when a stranger can accomplish either of these feats.

The camel of Arabia has only a single hump, which is round and fleshy, whilst the animal continues in good condition. No sooner, however, does he begin to feel the inroads of famine than a very remarkable change takes place. By a singular provision of nature, an absorption of this excrescence supplies the place of other nourishment; nor does the body exhibit any considerable diminution of bulk, until little more of the hump remains except its frame-work of bones and muscles. Such is the universal report given by the Bedowins, whose ample means of observation entitle their opinions to respect.

Whilst young they are pretty-looking animals, but when aged and over-worked they generally lose their hair, and become very unsightly objects. In general they have a clean sleek coat, usually of a light brown colour, with a fringe of dark hair along the neck; but this covering in the Arabian or Desert camel is less profuse than in that of Upper Asia, which is better adapted to the climate of those regions. In Arabia I have

occasionally seen one of these animals perfectly black; but the Bishyrean camel, on the Nubian coast, is quite white. The eye of the camel resembles that of the gazelle; it is large, dark, soft, and prominent, and retains its peculiar brilliancy under the fiercest glare of the sun and sand. Its feet are large and spreading, and covered at the lower part with a rough, flexible skin, well adapted to a dry soil, but they soon fail them in wet or slippery places. Neither is the camel better pleased with a loose sandy soil than other animals; it is a hard but fine gravelly plain in which he delights; although, provided they are rough, he can ascend the steepest and most rugged paths with the same facility and secureness of footing as a mule.

Camels bear a high price in Omán. I have known one hundred and forty dollars paid for one. Depth of chest and largeness of barrel constitute their chief excellencies. From thirty to fifty dollars is however their average price.

The great length of the camel's neck enables the animal, without stopping, to nip the thorny shrubs which everywhere abound on

the Desert, and, although the spines on some are sufficiently formidable to pierce a thick shoe, the cartilaginous formation of their mouth enables them to feed without difficulty. The Bedowin also, when walking, devotes a considerable portion of his time in collecting and feeding his camel with the succulent plants and herbs which cross his path. These, on a journey, with a few handfuls of dates or beans, form its ordinary food; but while encamped, he is fed on the green stalk of the jowaree and the leaves and tender branches of the tarfa*, heaped on circular mats, and placed before the animal, who kneels while he is partaking of them. In Southern Arabia they are fed on salt, and even fresh fish.

During a journey it is customary to halt about four o'clock, remove the loads, and permit the camels to graze around. If the Arabs are desirous of preventing them from straying too far, they tie their fore-legs together, or bind the fetlock to the upper joint by a cord. The head is never secured, excepting whilst travelling, when the Arabs

* Tamarix Orientalis.

unite them in single file by fastening the head of one to the tail of his predecessor. Towards evening they are called in for their evening meal, and placed in a kneeling posture round the baggage. They do not browse after dark, and seldom attempt to rise, but continue to chew the cud throughout the greater part of the night. If left to themselves they usually plant their hind quarters to the wind. The male, as well as the female, voids its urine backwards, and, as the ground there becomes wet and uncomfortable, they continue slowly, without changing their recumbent position, to move themselves forward.

Authorities differ as to the period the camel can endure thirst. Buffon mentions five days as an extraordinary instance; Tavernier, a good authority, nine; but it appears that camels, like several other ruminating animals, when fed on succulent herbage, do not require water; and a friend, who has had ample opportunities of judging, assures me that he once travelled from Baghdad to Damascus, a journey of twenty-five days, without the camels once drinking—a sufficiency of moisture

being afforded by the abundant vegetation there found at every stage.

Notwithstanding its patience and other admirable qualities, the camel is gifted with but little sagacity, nor does it appear to be capable of forming any strong attachment to its master, although they frequently do so to one of their own kind with which they have long been accustomed to travel. In protracted desert journeys the camel appears fully sensible that his safety consists in keeping close to the caravan; for, if detained behind, he never ceases making strenuous efforts to regain it. A recent traveller* represents the camel as a peaceful, quiet animal. He says that "they eat with a sort of regularity and order, a little at a time; and that, if either of them left his place, his companion appeared gently to reprove him, which made the other to feel his fault, and return to it again." On the contrary, I should say, they are the most quarrelsome brutes in existence. After the hardest day's journey, no sooner is the baggage removed than the attention of the driver is constantly required to keep them from

* Ali Bey. Badhica.

fighting; the "gentle reprovals" being ferocious bites and lacerations of each other's ears.

Volney calculates the pace of the camels of Syria at three thousand six hundred yards per hour; and Captain Burnes, who has devoted considerable attention to the subject, found it in Turkistan to be nearly the same. In Omán I have however ascertained their average rate of caravan travelling to be considerably more—to determine which, I adopted the following method: By means of a good watch I on several occasions accurately noted the time which was occupied in passing between two places lying north and south of each other, the latitudes of which I had carefully fixed, and the result gives from two and a half to two and three quarters geographical miles an-hour; and this, I observe, is the same as that reckoned by Burckhardt. But the usual pace of the Omán camels, when the Bedowins mount them for a desert journey, is a quick hard trot, from six to eight miles an hour. They will continue this for twenty to twenty-four consecutive hours; but increase their speed, on occasions which

require it, to thirteen and fifteen miles an hour. The female is esteemed swifter than the male; nevertheless, the Bedowins, in consequence of its greater spirit, not unfrequently prefer the latter. The load of the camel differs very considerably. In Egypt, when supplied with abundance of food, they carry upwards of a thousand pounds; but the ordinary burden in a caravan journey is from two hundred and fifty to five hundred pounds. The motions and paces of the camel are ungainly; its walk, its trot at speed, its gallop, being equally violent and disagreeable.

They adorn the necks of these animals with a band of cloth or of leather, upon which are strung or sewn small shells called cowries, in the form of half-moons. To these the Sheïkhs add ornaments of silver, so that, even in the present day, they would form a valuable prize to the spoiler. We possibly have here an illustration of several passages in Holy Writ, as Judges iii. 20. 26, when camel ornaments are mentioned in connexion with jewels and other articles of value. The shells are strung in a semicircular form; hence the phrase "ornaments like the moon."

The camel is subjected to but few diseases. In damp places its feet crack and ulcerate: the rot is especially fatal; hundreds, when the Syrian Hajj remains encamped at Aleppo and other large cities, being sometimes swept off by it. Petroleum is the most usual remedy. A glandular swelling in the neck, which usually kills him in three or four days, and colics, are also said to prevail in the spring and autumn of the year. The actual cautery is put in requisition for all these.

When the camel on a journey refuses to rise, the Arabs universally abandon him to his fate. It is seldom they get on their legs again, though instances have occurred where they have done so, and completed a journey of several days. I have often passed them when thus abandoned, and remarked their mournful looks as with mute eloquence they gazed after the receding caravan. When the Arab is upbraided with inhumanity, because he does not at once put a period to the animal's sufferings, he answers that the law forbids taking away life, save for food; and even then, pardon is to be implored for the necessity which compels the act. When death

approaches the poor solitary, vultures and other rapacious birds, which espy or scent their prey at an incredible distance, assemble in flocks, and, darting upon the body, commence their repast even before life is extinct. Thus, in well-beaten routes, the traveller continually sees remains of this faithful servant of man, exhibiting sometimes the perfect skeleton, covered with its shrunk and shrivelled hide, sometimes the bones only, altogether deprived of flesh, and bleached to dazzling whiteness by the scorching rays of a desert sun.

Those belonging to the Imám excepted, there are very few horses in Omán, and in some places the sight of them is unknown. On one occasion, when mounted on mine, and riding some distance ahead of the caravan, I was mistaken for a Wahhábí, and within an ace of being shot as such by another party advancing from one of the towns. To the fleetness of this noble animal, which, in compliment to its princely donor, I had named Sayyid, I was indebted, on another occasion, for the preservation of my life. On my return from Obrí to Suweïk, contrary to the wish of the

Bedowins, who had received intelligence that the Wahhábís were lurking around, I left the village where we had halted alone, with my gun, in search of game. Scarcely had I rode three miles from the walls when, suddenly turning an angle of the rocks, I found myself within a few yards of a group of about a dozen horsemen, who lay on the ground, basking listlessly in the sun. To turn my horse's head and away, was the work scarcely of an instant; but hardly had I done so ere the whole party were also in their saddles, in full cry after me. Several balls whizzed past my head, which Sayyid acknowledged by bounding forward like an antelope. He was accustomed to these matters; and their desire to possess him unharmed, alone prevented my pursuers from bringing him down. As we approached the town, I looked behind me. A Sheïkh, better mounted than his followers, was in advance, his dress and long hair streaming behind him, while he poised his long spear on high, apparently in doubt whether he was sufficiently within range to pierce me. My good stars decided that he was not; for, reining up his horse, he rejoined

his party, whilst I gained the walls in safety. These were probably the same men who had murdered the two messengers despatched to me by the Imám of Maskat, and to which circumstance Sayyid ibn Kalfán alludes in his letter, given in the Appendix.

The day before Sayyid came into my hands he had been presented to the Imám by a Nejd Sheïkh. Reared in domesticity, and accustomed to share the tent of some family in that country, he possessed in an extraordinary degree all the gentleness and docility, as well as the fleetness, which distinguish the pure breed of Arabia. To avoid the intense heat, and spare their camels, the Bedowins frequently halted during my journey for an hour about mid-day. On these occasions Seyyid would remain perfectly still, while I reposed on the sand, skreened by the shadow of his body. My noon repast of dates he always looked for, and shared. Whenever we halted, after unsaddling him, and taking off his bridle with my own hands, he was permitted to roam about the encampment without control. At sunset he came for his corn at the sound of my voice; and during the night, without

being fastened, he [illegible] took up his quarters at a few yards from his master. During my coasting voyages along the shores of Omán, he always accompanied me, and even in a crazy open boat across the ocean from Maskat to India. My health having compelled me to return to England overland, I could not in consequence bring Sayyid with me. In parting with this attached and faithful creature, so long the companion of my perils and wanderings, I am not ashamed to acknowledge that I felt an emotion similar to what is experienced in being separated from a tried and valued friend.

Several of the Imám's horses are of the noblest breed in Nejd, some of his mares being valued at from 1500 to 2000 dollars; and one horse, the most perfect and beautiful creature I ever saw, was considered to be worth an equal sum. He maintains a portion of his stud at Maskat; but the greater number is at Burka and Suweïk, where they pay great attention to the breed and rearing of these noble animals. Camels and asses are, however, more generally used for travelling in Omán; and although a Sheïkh may occa-

sionally think it obligatory to ride on the latter, all other classes are less fastidious. They are large, well made, and endure great fatigue. The Arabs take considerable care of them; and some of the better kind fetch from forty to fifty dollars. Those which traverse the Jebel Akhdar, in point of size, sturdiness, and sureness of step, are almost equal to mules crossing the most difficult passes, over a smooth limestone rock, without a single false step. A great many asses are shipped from Omán to the eastern ports of Persia, and also to the Isle of France, where they are highly valued*.

Buffaloes are unknown; oxen are not numerous, and they all have the hump which is supposed to be a distinguishing mark of the African species. Their value for agricultural and other labours is too considerable to allow of their being killed for food, excepting at the large towns. They are principally used for drawing water, for ploughing, and for treading out the grain. On the sea-coast, where there is a great scarcity of fodder,

*There are no vehicles of any description either carried or drawn in Omán, nor, as far as I have seen, in any other part of Arabia.

they are fed on dates, or fish, either fresh or salted.

Goats abound throughout Omán, but sheep are scarce, and usually of a black colour, and small size; but as they are mostly fed on aromatic herbs, of which there are great abundance, their flesh is sweet and well flavoured. The tail, though larger than that of the European breed, is less ponderous than those brought from the African shore. The Arabs do not castrate either sheep or goats, but destroy the generative principle in the male by means of a tight ligature.

With the exception of fowls, which are abundant and cheap, the Arabs of Omán have no domestic poultry. Game is scarce: the only water-fowl I saw there during my stay were some wild ducks, of the *Anas boschas* variety, and not in the slightest degree fishy. Doves, plovers, and pigeons are very numerous, but the Arabs never trouble themselves with killing them. Quails, the common brown, or Desert partridge, and a species of pheasant, are found in great abundance on the plains. The tenor of the Mohammedan law places a great restriction on

shooting. Directly the bird falls the sportsman runs up, and cuts his throat. If a sufficiency of blood does not flow from the wound, it is pronounced unfit for food. Eagles breed amidst the mountains, and three varieties of vulture are found on the plains. A great abundance and variety of sea-fowl frequent the sea-coast: of these the most common are the laughing sea-gull (*Ridibundus*), the noddy (*Stolida*), red-throated diver (*Septentrionalis*), the white spoon-bill (*Leucorodia*), the Indian crane (*Antigone*). The whole line of coast abounds in fish, but as they are, with one or two exceptions, the same as those of India, I forbear to enumerate them. Maskat is often visited by a large grampus, which our sailors call the Maskat Tom, and the Arabs Oúey. It sometimes capsizes their boats, and plays, according to their report, other mischievous pranks, but I have never heard of its committing any serious injury.

Maskat Cove some years ago was so abundantly filled with the small fish called sardinas in the Mediterranean, that they might be obtained in any quantity, and a great number were preserved and exported; but

about two years ago they wholly deserted their former quarters, and are now only found in the vicinity of Gambrún on the Persian shore. I have heard it related by the inhabitants, that about every fifth or sixth year the fish on the coast are visited by some epidemic, which destroys them in vast numbers, and many are then thrown up on the shore. In the running streams there are numerous small fry, but the natives do not eat them. The insects and reptiles are locusts, wasps, bees, tortoises, lizards, scorpions, and many others common to India.

A considerable diversity in the geographical features of the country produces in Omán a corresponding variation in the climate. Away from the sea-coast, to the westward of the mountains, the air is very dry in the cold, and excessively hot in the warm season; but in Batna, the high mountains which retreat considerably from the coast arrest the progress of the vapours exhaled and wafted from the ocean, and it is comparatively cool and moist. The exuberant vegetation of the oases reduces the temperature, but the climate, at the same time, is especially obnox-

ious to strangers. Violent fevers, which have very generally a fatal termination, prevail all the cool season; indeed those who reside in the oases bear striking evidence of the fact, that the air which is most favourable to vegetable, has a contrary effect on human life. They appeared during my stay among them to be constantly suffering from sickness, and have not the vigorous and healthy look of the Bedowins. Their houses, damp and gloomy-looking edifices, which the sun's rays never warm, are built within their groves. Around them are swamps and pools of water, bordered by a rank and luxuriant vegetation, and the inhabitant steps from such a locality to the arid and burning Desert. The causes of such insalubrity are, therefore, fully as apparent as the effects. On the other hand, the district occupied by the Bení Abú 'Alí tribe, the territories of the Bení Geneba, and the Batna coast, are remarkable for their salubrity. People who have been attacked in the former with fevers, dysenteries, &c., aided by the pure air and plain diet, generally recover after a month's residence in the latter districts. The small village of Síb,

about twenty miles to the northward of Maskat, is especially celebrated for its restorative qualities.

Ophthalmia and other diseases of the eye seem very frequent, especially amidst those who reside in the oases. The sudden transition from the gloom of their groves to the glare of the Desert is sufficient to originate disease, and their uncleanly habits to continue it. They are perfect gluttons in medicine, and will swallow as much as is given them; but they laughed at, and wholly neglected my prescription of frequent ablutions. Some few cases of calculus came under my notice, but, I believe, they are not common, nor have they any knowledge of performing an operation to relieve it. I saw no instances of leprosy in Omán. Two cases of dracunculus were shown me: their mode of extraction is the same as that of India.

In the eleventh and twelfth centuries the Arabians are well known to have carried their researches into the vegetable kingdom to a very great extent. They also possessed an extensive acquaintance with the science of medicine, and modern physicians grate-

fully acknowledge various articles of high repute for which their materia medica is indebted to the Arabs; but in neither of those branches do they at present possess even respectable attainments. In fevers they wholly abstain from animal food, drink copiously of sherbet, and partake freely of melons, cucumbers, and other cooling vegetables. At Neswah, which contains nearly a thousand inhabitants, I found it impracticable to procure an individual who could let blood. Gunshot and sabre wounds, where every one carries a matchlock and sword, are of frequent occurrence, but their treatment is equally simple, though, from their plain diet, and temperate habit of body, they are in many instances uncommonly successful.

Encircled as Maskat is by naked rocks, the sun's rays become there concentrated as into a focus, and the heat at certain seasons is almost intolerable. On the 10th of April, at five in the evening, Fahrenheit's thermometer was 106°, and then not a breath of wind was stirring. Very generally, however, during the day this extreme heat is moderated by cool and refreshing sea-breezes.

The general state of the atmosphere will be best exhibited by a reference to the abstract of the Meteorological Register which is subjoined. Rain falls from October to March, but rarely more than three or four days in each month, when the storms, though heavy, are partial. The lofty summits of the Jebel Akhdar arrest the clouds in their progress, and copious showers give rise to numerous streams, which flow down and cross the plains on either side the chain. Snow and ice in the winter months in those regions are not unknown, and in that of March hail-storms frequently pass over the plains below. The dews at night are singularly copious, leaving upon the trees and surface of the ground the same effects as would be produced by smart rain. On the Desert the atmosphere is usually clear and cloudless, and in the day the sky is of the deepest blue. At night the stars shine forth with a brilliancy unknown in other climes. The cold at that season, as in all other sandy tracts, is proportionate to the heat of the day; but fevers appear to be unknown there; and the Bedowin who sleeps in the sand receives additional vigour and vivacity

from the purity of the air he breathes in his slumbers.

Primitive limestone is the predominant rock in Omán, the principal chain of mountains being almost solely of this formation, and it enters largely into the composition of the inferior ranges.

In the northern provinces, and on the seashore in the vicinity of Maskat, hills rising one thousand five hundred and sometimes two thousand feet in height are composed wholly of mica slate, deposited in thin folds, and twisted into a variety of tortuous forms. In the vicinity of Ras Mussendom there are basaltic rocks, in some places forming steep acclivities, and in others assuming the shape of mountain-caps. Arabia has been pronounced to be wholly destitute of the precious metals, but in this province we meet with silver associated as is usual with lead. Copper is also found: at a small hamlet on the road from Semed to Neswah there is a mine which the Arabs at present work, but the others are wholly neglected. Even in the vicinity of Maskat the hills are very metalliferous. No precious stones, as far as I can learn, have at any time been found.

CHAPTER XX.

Commercial Advantages of Omán—Simple Habits of the People—Deficiency of internal Commerce explained—Natives of the Sea-coast—Early Commercial Enterprise—Low State of Learning, Arts, and Manufactures—General Indifference to Knowledge—An Exception—Sayyid Ibn Kalfán—Sugar Manufactory—Cotton Cloths—The Lúngí—Silk-weavers—Camalines—Ulwah—Sweetmeats—Honey—Vineyards—Artisans—Manufactory of Arms—Female Ornaments—Pureness of Gold—Religious Tenets—Population—Original Stock—Feuds—Honour and good Faith—General Character—Foundation of Quarrels—Morality—Ceremonious Behaviour—Salutations—Simplicity.

If we consider the advantageous position of Omán, as an emporium for the trade of India, Persia, and Arabia, it cannot fail to strike us with surprise that the province generally has never reached any considerable degree of commercial importance. We find, on the contrary, that, with the exception of Maskat, Sohar, and Kilhat, which collectively enjoyed but a scanty portion, even at the period when the main stream of that immense commerce

flowed from India, past its ports, to Europe, enriching every country in its course, Omán alone was exempted from sharing in its benefits. But, in a country where, from the frugal habits of its people, the artificial wants are few, and its natural wants are, as in this instance, supplied by agricultural resources, there cannot exist much internal commerce. Its people are therefore in a measure independent of other nations, and too proud of their birth, country, and freedom, to mingle with their less fortunate neighbours: they have ever retained the same isolated and original condition. The only class who do engage in commercial pursuits are those residing near the sea, where we may infer that, while attending their fisheries along an extensive line of coast, they first acquired a disposition for enterprise and navigation. In the latter they must at an early period have attained considerable perfection, since we learn* that their ships, in the twelfth century, sailed from Sohar on distant voyages, even so far as China. At present nearly the whole of the commerce of Omán passes

* Geo. Nubiensis.

through the hands of the merchants at Maskat; and I have given in my account of that city all the necessary details. Its several branches at Súr, Burka, Sohar, and Schinas, are of minor importance, being principally confined to the exportation of dates, for which they receive in exchange grain, Indian cloth, and fire-wood. The existing state of learning, the arts, and manufactures, does not in Omán rise superior to the low ebb at which they are found in other parts of Arabia: indeed, in all these respects, they are far inferior to their neighbours of Yemen. Though I purposely sought amidst the most intelligent persons, I found but one who had any knowlege of astronomy, or indeed of literature or of the sciences generally; nor do they possess a wish to cultivate them. We must not, however, on this account conclude that there is any want of capacity or intellect. One individual in particular, named Sayyid Ibn Kalfán, who had been educated in Calcutta, was sufficiently versed in nautical astronomy to be able to take the sun with a sextant and artificial horizon, to calculate his observations, and to rate chronometers. He had

been in command of several of the Imám's largest ships, and has on more than one occasion navigated the Liverpool (74) between Zanzibar and Maskat*.

My instruments excited at first more attention than I desired; but this feeling soon died away when they were informed they were not made of gold. I could not, during my stay, obtain a book or manuscript on any other subject than commentaries on the Koran and divinity in general: on these points, together with reading and writing, their children are alone instructed.

At some of the principal towns sugar is manufactured in large quantities; but although the cane is of a very superior quality, the material, owing to some difficulty which they cannot get over in granulating it, has but an indifferent appearance; it forms, however, the principal export from Maskat, where, as well as at Neswah, and several of the other principal towns, they manufacture large quantities

* As a specimen of his proficiency in the English language, I present the reader, in the Appendix, with letters addressed by him to me. Besides exhibiting a considerable portion of natural talent, they are curious in many other points of view. The polished blade-bone of a camel serves them as a tablet to write on, and they use a kind of ink easily obliterated.

of ulwah, a mixture of sugar, honey, ghee, and almonds, boiled to a dense paste, of which large quantities are sent to India and Persia in shallow earthen basins about ten inches in diameter. They manufacture a sweetmeat similar to this in Syria, from the expressed juice of the grape; an inferior kind is also made from the karúb or locust tree, which, when boiled to the consistency of honey, is called dibs by the natives; and from the Arabian being the same as the Hebrew, דבש is most probably the article translated honey, with which the land of Canaan was said to abound. Wherever in Syria or Palestine there are vineyards, it is still met with; and when mixed with the juice of the olive, forms a principal article of food with the poorer classes. By adding the ground pulp of the sesamum orientale to this dibs, and baking both lightly in an oven, it is rendered into هلبوى hlewy. Cotton, canvass, and cotton cloths of a coarse texture, are manufactured by the men at their own houses. Of these, the Lúngí is the most common and valuable; they are mostly about ten feet long, and two feet six inches, or three feet broad,

and striped horizontally with red and blue. They are used either to bind round the waist, or as turbans; their price varies from five to ten dollars. The females spin and prepare the yarn. At Benî Abú Hassan, I saw in an open shed about thirty silk weavers at work: the colours were good, but the workmanship was coarse, and the devices rude. In the northern provinces, the kamaline (a large woollen cloak) is fabricated; but their quality is far inferior to those brought from Nejd.

I have elsewhere had occasion to observe that there are but few artisans in Omán. At the principal towns blacksmiths manufacture spear-heads, the crooked dagger, called a jambîr, and some rude knives: copper pots and dishes are also made by another class; but silversmiths are far more numerous than either. Considerable sums are lavished by the females in the purchase of various silver ornaments, and their children are literally burdened with them. I have counted as many as fifteen ear-rings on either side; and their heads, breasts, arms, and ancles, are decorated with the same profusion. There are also many workers in gold, but the articles

which they turn out of hand appear not well finished; the metal they use seems of the purest kind.

As regards their religious tenets, the people of Omán belong to the sect of the Khuwarijites*, a tribe of Mohammedans found also in other portions of the East, widely distant from the country I am now describing. The cities of Nafúsá and Jarba, in Northern Africa, formerly subject to the Grand Signior, and that of Jebel Musib, a dependency of the Emperor of Morocco, still profess the peculiar doctrines of the Khuwarijites. These heretics the Sooltan has made many efforts to chastise; but from the utter scarcity of water which prevails in the country intervening between him and them, his attempts have been in every instance unsuccessful. Like the Moravians of Christendom, the Khuwarijites highly value themselves on being followers of the pure tenets of their prophet, unalloyed by any intermixture with the heresies which at different periods have sprung up in the Mohammedan world. We must, however, consider this to apply chiefly to the inhabitants of the Desert, and small inland towns; for as to the Arabs resi-

* Called also "Biazi."

dent at the sea-ports, or in large trading cities, they, from causes similar to those which influence the professors of a purer faith, under similar circumstances, have become more lax in their religious discipline; and Shíahs, Súnnís, and Mú'tázís, sects which immigrated into Omán at a comparatively recent period, abound there. These, in the true spirit of Mohammedan proselytism, are incessantly labouring to gain over the pure Khuwarijites to their own way of thinking, though hitherto, I believe, with little success. At one period, also, a great number of the Khuwarijite Bedowins dwelling around the towns became followers of the Wahhábís; and since the defeat of those fanatics, have joined one or other of the heresies just alluded to.

As regards the ceremonial portion of the faith professed by this class, their practice seems distinguished by a much greater simplicity than belongs to most other Mohammedan sectaries. At the birth of a child, for instance, nothing more is at present thought necessary than the rite of circumcision at the usual age, common to all Moslem professors;

for though some few voluntary ceremonies, including a sacrifice, were formerly admitted, these have been long laid aside. Their funerals are also conducted with little external display. They merely wash the body carefully, while one of those present recites certain prayers composed for the occasion. It is true that a few ignorant and extravagant persons sometimes spend great sums of money in providing sumptuous entertainments for the mourners; but among the higher classes of the natives these practices are unknown. In truth, they are directly opposed to the precepts of the Koran, where the Prophet commands food to be given to those only who have been immediately concerned in depositing the body within the grave.

The lawfulness or unlawfulness of the use of coffee, owing to the word signifying an intoxicating liquor, as well as a refreshing drink made from berries, has been a subject of controversy among Mohammedan professors, and is thus disposed of by the Khuwarijites in general. They affirm, that a certain saint of distinguished piety, on one particular occasion, was desirous of passing the whole night in prayer

and supplication to the Almighty, but sleep overpowered him. He therefore resorted to this drink, one of whose known effects is to produce extreme watchfulness; and finding that it completely banished his former drowsiness, he named it "coffee," that is, a stimulating liquor. The authority and example of this learned and pious Moslem, as well as the known fact, that many of the most eminent expounders of the law were equally favourable to its general use, had due weight with the Khuwarijites; and in consequence, the use of coffee became universal. They further assert, in defence of the practice, that not the slightest passage prohibitory of this favourite beverage can be traced in the Koran, or any other orthodox Mohammedan work *.

One remarkable peculiarity in the opinions of the Khuwarijites consists in the jealousy with which they disclaim connexion with any of the numerous other sects into which the disciples of the Prophet have been split. "We approximate," says a native writer, indignant

* Notwithstanding this, I must observe that the Imám, and some other strict Moslems, from religious scruples, entirely abstain from this beverage.

at the bare supposition that the people of Omán had ever been an offset of any one of these—"we approximate not to any sect, nor does any sect approximate to us. How can we be in alliance with those innovators who oppose God's religion?"

In the true spirit of intolerance, he then proceeds to denounce all those whose faith differs from his own. "We conclude such to be devoted to ruin; enemies of God; infidels, whose portion hereafter shall be in Gehenna for ever. They deny the eternity of future punishments; they diminish the enormity of sin; we enhance it. The portion of the wicked surely will be for ever, for God is great*! Their doctrines content not our intelligent ones; away with it! away with it!"

The same writer mentions the existence of a tradition that the Mussulmans were to be divided into no less than seventy-three sects, of which, in course, only one could be orthodox; and hints the people of Omán is that one, grounding his opinion on the sense of the Arabic word ناجية, which signifies "escaping," as well as "safe." In fact, the great points

* From a MS. in the Author's possession.

of contention between the Khuwarijites and their co-religionists may be said to spring from another famous and oft-disputed question, whether Mohammed actually saw the Deity or not? The Súnnís strenuously maintain that he did, which their antagonists as strenuously deny, asserting that such an opinion is in fact infidelity; and "to say God can be seen, being to limit and circumscribe the illimitable and incomprehensible, is therefore absurd*." The Khuwarijites reject the interpretation of those verses of the Korán brought forward by the Súnnís to confirm their own peculiar views, and assert that these passages are to be received in a figurative, and not in a literal sense. Moses, for example, is said to have seen God; but this they will have to mean simply, that he witnessed the effects of His power and majesty, not that he viewed him face to face. Thus, again, as regards the Moslem belief respecting the scales of the day of judgment, in which all men are to be weighed; and the bridge El-Sirát, leading towards the gates of Paradise. The former, say the Khuwarijites, is a

* MS. quoted above.

mere metaphorical expression, accordant with the usual style of oriental phraseology, which any one will readily comprehend; the latter means nothing more than the narrow path of truth.

The Súnnís again, divide the wicked into two classes; the first consisting of infidels and pagans, the second of reprobates and apostates; but they refuse to style the *latter* infidels, however unworthy as Moslems they may happen to be. The Khuwarijites, on the contrary, more strict and more conscientious, consider all who have once renounced their faith to be unbelievers, distinguishing, however, the infidelity of grace from the infidelity of reprobacy; and look upon all pagans, in which denomination they include Christians, as coming under this latter class.

Furthermore, the Súnnís assert the infallibility and divine authority of the prophet's companions, saying it is a sin to disobey their concurring determination, and that they inherited the right of true judgment. This, also, the Khuwarijites deny, on the plea that if the son of Noah—the child of a prophet—did wrong, so might a prophet's follower.

They accuse both Súnnís and Shíahs of error, in making certain texts of the Koran apply only to the prophet's descendants, when, according to the interpretation of the Khuwarijites, they have reference to the faithful of every rank and station. Finally, they deny that the authority of the four first Imáms is to be implicitly followed, as, in that case, both Alí and Abú Bekr were in error; the one for permitting a decision to be made by the Koran, the other for usurping an authority which was hereditary in the Prophet's family. Their own Imám they regard in two points of view—as a temporal governor, and an absolute indefeasibly appointed sovereign, whose authority is of God.

As to the derivation of the name of Khuwarijites, these writers assert that Muwaïyah having rebelliously opposed Alí, after some contest, finding himself about to be worsted, proposed a reference to the Koran. His adversary consented; but some of Alí's followers protested against this mode of procedure, urging that rebels and sinners against God were not fit judges of the Imámship; that if they decided against him, his adherents must be

regarded in the light of supporters of usurpation and tyranny, and that they could not accept an Imám of their choice. Alí refusing to listen to them, they departed from him; hence the derivation of the name of Khuwarijites—that is "seceders." Their first step was to appoint an Imám of their own, maintaining that Alí resigned his right to that office by allowing his pretensions to be decided upon by those who were not Imáms, and thus rendered it lawful for the Khuwarijites to do the same. They likewise charge Alí with the slaughter of many of their sect, and that he died without repentance, since he exhibited none of the evidences which are considered necessary corroborations of such a state. Of two of these requisite proofs, viz., restitution and reparation, he certainly made no manifestation, nor did this sect ever suffer their faith to depend upon him, nor do they shape either their faith or their notions of right by the example of the great doctors, but from the harmonious concurrence of the "Book."

Respecting Harút and Marút, to whom considerable allusion is made in the religious

treatises of the Moslems, they strenuously endeavour to combat the received opinion that they were angels sent by God to Babylon, where they committed adultery with Zahrat, or Venus. Even admitting them to have been angels, say they, we are not authorised in accusing them upon less evidence than the divine law enjoins; and, by the word of God, no believing person can be accused of that crime, except on the testimony of four eye-witnesses. Without such proof, those who originate the charge are to be received as liars, and are liable to the judgment appointed for such. The Khuwarijites do not regard Harút and Marút as celestial creatures, but as two eminent citizens of Babylon, commissioned by God to reveal to their fellow-men the difference between right and wrong; the indifferent and the permitted; with a knowledge of the nature and peculiarities of language. Indeed, the opinion that they were men, and not angels, receives some additional confirmation from the Arabic word applied to these beings, signifying "kings or princes" only.

In closing my brief and imperfect sketch of

this remarkable sect of Mohammedanism, of which, however, except in Sale's preliminary discourse, affixed to his translation of the Koran, I am not aware we have any previous information; I shall merely notice their peculiar interpretation of that famous passage where it is said that God and his angels pray unto Mohammed. "O ye who believe, pray unto, and salute him with salutations." Now Mohammed being a servant of God, how, consistently, can He be said to pray to him? Their writers, finding this a somewhat embarrassing question, meet it by a rather ingenious evasion. They assert that the words refer to a common expression of all Mohammedans, when speaking of their Prophet, viz., "The blessing and peace of God be upon him," and addressed by men to God, not to the Prophet. The phrase, "pray unto him," meaning in reality, pray *with respect* to him. In like manner is the same prayer addressed by angels to God in his behalf, just as they entreat him to grant pardon and forgiveness to all Moslems: that Mohammed was in a remarkable manner the deputy of God, being privileged to communicate with him by articu-

late sounds, by the hearing of the ear, and the utterance of the tongue; therefore, say they, in a minor sense, God prayed unto, *i. e.*, requested him.

Although the Khuwarijites regard the Imámship, when once lawfully obtained, as a kind of pontificate almost infallible, their arguments upon the subject much resemble those which we might imagine a Transalpine Roman Catholic, who asserts the *sole* infallibility of the Pope, might urge, if that Pope became a heretic and schismatic, and wished to use his alleged infallibility for the enforcement of his opinions. He might justly argue, that his opinions annulled his office, although the dilemma still remains of regarding infallible opinions as fallible. We may further observe, that the discrepancies in Mohammedan sects are irreconcilable, being founded upon irreconcilable texts of the Koran, and tradition only, nor can it be determined which is the repealed, and which the repealing verse.

These remarks are grounded on native information. They were principally furnished me by an Arab, a singular character, who thus concludes a very curious series of notes:—

"From the Fakir, Servant of God, Nasir Ibn 'Abú Mihán, *the Distressed One!*" And verily, as regards his outward man, nothing could be more appropriate than the latter portion of this designation. When I last saw him he was clothed in rags, the personification of misery, and exhibited every symptom of squalid wretchedness. A beggar, however, by choice, his state of poverty was entirely voluntary, for the prince, his master, in consideration of his great endowments, has repeatedly offered him a permanent and comfortable asylum. This he obstinately refuses to accept, preferring a vagabond, unsettled condition before the favours of a court. He therefore depends for his daily sustenance upon alms, bestowed by pious Moslems, who regard works of charity as an essential portion of their religious observances.

The manuscript itself is really a literary curiosity. Some small portion has been already quoted, *verbatim*, in these pages, and the reader will perceive it to be imbued with a spirit which too frequently pervades religious discussions in every country. He will discover excessive spiritual pride; the fiercest

intolerance towards those professing opposite tenets; and a sort of monopoly of righteousness, cloaked beneath studied meekness and assumed humility. However, notwithstanding these defects, his treatise certainly displays great subtilty of argument, with extensive theological as well as historical reading. Like Hudibras,

> He could a hair divide
> Betwixt the south and south-west side.

And when considered in reference to the notoriously contradictory tenets of Islamism, it is an amusing specimen of that singular aptitude, possessed by some men, for making "the worse appear the better cause."

Ibn 'Abú Mihán resided in Maskat at the time I left Omán.

Its population must be classed under two separate heads; those who reside permanently in the towns and oases, and the Bedowins, who inhabit the intermediate Desert. The latter are the indigenous inhabitants of the country, retaining all the personal characteristics of the true sons of Ishmael; the former are fairer, and somewhat more fleshy, although the difference is far less

marked here than in other settled and civilized parts of Arabia. Both classes have mixed with their Khuwarijite conquerors, whose faith they embraced, and all distinction is now lost between them; but they have preserved another, which is forgotten, as far as I know, in other provinces. The Arabian historians derive the present population of Omán from two stocks; Jactan*, the son of Eber and Adnan†, the descendant of Ishmael‡. In Omán, the posterity of the former are styled Ummarí, and that of the latter Gaáffrí; but these terms seem peculiar to the province, for by other writers the first are called Arab el Arabi, or pure Arabs, and the latter El Arab el Mustarab||, or mixed Arabs.

These two classes in Omán regard each other with mutual hatred. The town Arabs, independent of this distinction, are also divided into tribes, who engage as fiercely in quarrel with each other as their brethen of the Desert; and the detestable laws of blood

* Jactan the son of Hebra.

† The Arabs trace their descent as far as Adnan, but not to Ishmael.

‡ Robinson's *Calmet*, Boston Ed. p. 570. Ante, A.D. 1817.

|| Mos-Arabes, or Mostæ-Arabes.

revenge are, if possible, more strictly enforced. Their feuds most commonly originate either in these or with the Sheïkhs, who have constantly some hereditary or personal quarrels with their neighbours. During their continuance, hostilities are conducted in the same manner, and on the same principle of good faith, as in the Desert. Such events do not disturb the general tranquillity, and a traveller passes through the districts of rival tribes without fear of interruption. The agricultural pursuits in which they engage are not considered disreputable, as in other parts of Arabia, nor do they produce the usual effects of abridging the invincible attachment to freedom — witness the late defeat of the Wahhábís, in a pitched battle by the inhabitants of Bedí'ah, who could only assemble a third of the force brought against them. Within this favourable estimate I cannot, however, include the inhabitants of the sea-coast, especially the people of Maskat, whose poltroonery has been so often displayed, that with the other tribes a Maskatti and an arrant coward are held to be nearly synonymous.

The Arabs who inhabit the oases and

the towns within them are a proud, high-minded race, less corrupted or degenerated than those who, in other parts of Arabia, have passed from the pastoral to the agricultural state; their permanent residence and attachment to the soil has indeed stripped them of but few of those distinctive qualities which are possessed by their brethren of the Desert. They are hospitable, brave, and generous, but at the same time vindictive, irascible, and in a high degree susceptible of insult.

The most bloody affrays have originated from causes the most trifling; and I will mention, by way of proof, an incident to which I became an eye-witness. A family from a neighbouring tribe being on a visit to another in Bedí'ah, the son, a boy about ten years of age, while engaged in a struggle with another lad belonging to the town, received accidentally a cuff, which was intended by the father of the latter, who had come to separate them, for his own son. The former went away crying to his family, who were highly exasperated, and immediately took their departure for their own tribe. On the following morning, a deputation arrived at

Bedí'ah to demand some explanation of the insult. They sat down at eight o'clock to debate upon it, and several times the messengers rose, unsatisfied, to depart, in which case hostilities must immediately have ensued. The elders of the party, however, induced them again to seat themselves; and it was not until sunset that the grave matter was finally settled. A feast next day to about twenty of the offended tribe effected a perfect reconciliation.

A difference in the moral character of those residing in towns on the sea-coast, and such as occupy the inhabited parts of the interior, is also quite as striking in Omán as in most other parts of the world. An open profligacy of manners marks the lower classes within the former, and the habits of some of the higher orders are equally sensual and degraded; but I would not be understood to apply this generally, and the care taken to prevent such irregularities from becoming publicly known, is a sufficient proof that they are not wholly indifferent to the state of their moral character. As far as I could learn, in commercial transactions with each

other very little good faith is observed: nor does a departure from its principle in their social relations affect them to any considerable extent. The discharge of the duties of hospitality is as strictly exercised by all classes in Omán as in other parts of Arabia, and the stranger is everywhere received with respect*. As I have treated the subject of their religion elsewhere, I here merely observe that the inhabitants of Omán are far more tolerant than the generality of Mussulmans.

The most distinguishing and predominant trait in the character of the Arabs is their plainness and simplicity. It is not only exhibited in every act of their social intercourse, but will also be found pervading every feature of their courts of law and of their government. This freedom from pomp and ostentation, so different from other Orientals, places their character to Europeans in a very favourable light, and is, I think, with others, a reason why we estimate them higher in the scale. The following are among their most ordinary modes of salutation :—

* In Omán travellers are often entertained in the mosque.

"Salam alicum!" (Peace be with you!) To this the person addressed replies—

"Alicum salam!" (With you be peace!) —are words usually proffered upon entering a room, or in joining or passing a party on the road:

"Sabál kair!" (Good day!)

"Missa ul kair!" (Good evening!)

"Fe aman Alla!" (Under God's protection!)

"Alla yafazak!" (May God protect you!)

Either of these forms are used upon common or ordinary visits. Upon the entrance of the guest, the host and all who are present rise and return it, and continue standing until he has seated himself. In saluting a Sheïkh or governor, they add his surname to either of the above forms; and if he is of superior rank, kiss his hand. Individuals meeting abroad clasp the hand of each other. The Imám rises to Europeans visiting him, and seats them on his right hand.

CHAPTER XXI.

Entertainments — Evening Festivals — Author's ineffectual attempts to gain admission to — Ardent Spirits — Drunkenness — how punished by the Imám — Manufactory of Wine — Gaming — Divination — Love of Swinging — Musical Instruments — Martial Music — Feast of the "Aid" — War Dance — Condition of the Inhabitants — Dress — Offensive Arms — Shields — Food — Person and Ornaments of the Women — Sprightliness — Anecdote — Freedom of Arab Females — Sheïkh Government — Civilization.

THE inhabitants of the oases and towns are very fond of giving entertainments to each other, which are sometimes continued for three or four days. Contrary in their feelings to other Orientals, they are by no means insensible to the charms of natural scenery, and their guests are usually received in light buildings, (summer-houses we should style them) detached from their own dwellings, and often picturesquely situated beneath the shade of mangoe or tamarind trees. Within these they pass the day in feasting, and the

night, if report does not belie them, very often in revelling and debauchery.—

I have frequently joined these parties in the day-time, but the approach of sunset, when all retired to pray, served as a pretext to dismiss me, and I never could gain admittance afterwards. That they partake generally of the forbidden pleasures of wine can admit of no doubt, for large quantities are brought from the hills; and whenever brandy or other spirits are smuggled on shore at Maskat, (where they are contraband articles) the greater part is immediately carried off into the interior. Upon my arrival at Maskat I found a ship direct from England lying there, and the selection of her cargo was somewhat singular for a Mussulmann port, for a very large proportion consisted of hams and brandy. I do not know how far they were successful in disposing of the former, but the latter, notwithstanding the strict prohibition of the Imám, found its way to the shore in large quantities; and I heard from him that nearly half the population of Maskat was intoxicated during the time the supply lasted. One of his relatives even ventured to make his ap-

pearance before the Imám in this state; but the next day found him on his way to Zansibár, and I am told the offence was not repeated. The more rigid Mussulmanns not only hold it unlawful to taste wine, or to press grapes for the making of it, but they also object to the buying, selling, or even maintaining themselves with the money arising from its sale. On the Jebel Akhdar large quantities of wine is made, of which the inhabitants at their meals partake most freely and openly; and at all the principal towns where sugar is manufactured, they distil from its refuse an indifferent rum, which in the country finds a ready sale. Gaming, although equally forbidden by the Koran, chess, and some few Persian games played with cards brought from India, are what they usually indulge in. Their other amusements are but few: they have their professed story-tellers, who also during their feasts amuse them with songs, which they perform in a falsetto tone to the utmost extent of their voices. Divination or augury is practised in a variety of ways. I have already mentioned the burning of blade-bones, from which the practitioner pretends

to obtain portentous information by means of certain mystical characters which appear after partial calcination. Certain days in the month are set apart as unlucky, and on these they will neither fight, land soldiers, or put to sea. They have also recourse, for the detection of theft, to the assistance of conjurors, who follow the same plans as those of India. Both sexes are remarkably fond of swinging, and sometimes pass hours in this exercise; they seat themselves on a stick attached to a single rope, which is usually fastened to the branch of a tree. It is singular that the Arabians, who, notwithstanding the prohibition in the Koran, have always been considered a musical nation, and in whose language many treatises on harmony have been written, should possess no musical instruments of their own, and that even keeping them in their houses should be considered disgraceful. They however neither object nor refuse to listen to slaves playing on such as they use, which are brought from Africa; the principal one being a rude guitar possessing six strings, which pass across a piece of parchment, spread over

a wooden bowl, and produces notes by no means unpleasing. The drum, an invention of Arabia, is still used by the same class, an earthen jar being very frequently substituted for the belly of the instrument. It is often used as a call to collect the troops together; a long horn curved upwards is also applied to the same purpose.

At Suweïk, I witnessed the feast of the "aïd," instituted in commemoration of God staying the hand of Abraham. It was less showy than I have observed it to be in other parts of Arabia; for the peculiar religion they profess enjoins individuals of every class to abstain from costly articles of dress. They have consequently no expensive Cashmere shawls, as at Shaer; nor do they paint their faces in the same manner, or load their persons with such a profusion of rings and silver ornaments. The men amused themselves with horse and camel races, and with the same description of war-dance as I have described in my account of the Benî-Abû-'Alî Arabs. They also practised another, which I have never seen elsewhere: two lines form at the distance of ten or fifteen yards, and approach

each other to the sound of a drum, beaten by two slaves* stationed midway between them. They proceed at a slow and measured pace, until within about two yards from each other, and then either party, after simultaneously bowing their heads, retreated to the same distance as before; in this manner they continued to approach, bow, and retreat as long as I remained.

The condition of the people is in general far better than that of most other Eastern nations; and if the good or ill government of a country may be estimated by the proportion of those who enjoy independence and comfort, or the reverse, that of Omán is entitled to hold a high rank. Excepting at Maskat, and the other towns on the sea-coast, where they are mostly pilgrims, public beggars are very rarely met. The greater number of people appear decently clothed, have substantial dwelling-houses, are exempted from all imposts and taxes; and if the country

* In the course of the Narrative it has been mentioned how powerfully the organs of this people are affected by their rude instruments; it seems curious, therefore, that they should not improve on them.

boasts no capitalists nor extensive landed proprietors, it has also few in very low or indigent circumstances. Their wealth consists in a great measure in their date groves; every tree is registered, and marriage portions and legacies often consist of them alone.

The dress of the lower classes consists of a cloth bound round the waist, called lungi, a turban made of chequered linen, manufactured on the Burka coast, and a coarse cloak, or kamaline. That of the higher orders is composed of a long shirt: over this they wear a thin cloth cloak, usually of a brown colour, and open at the front and sleeves; and above all a white or dark-coloured kamaline, of very fine texture, usually brought from Nejd: a Cashmere shawl wrapped round the head as a turban, and a girdle for the jambír, completes their costume. All classes use the same description of sandal. Their arms consist of a matchlock of the same description as those usually found throughout the East; the barrel of great length, and ornamented with inlaid gold and silver. Their sword is a straight, double-edged, thin blade, about three feet in

length, having a long handle, without any guard. The jambír, or dagger, is usually about ten inches in length, and the haft, with those who can afford it, richly ornamented with gold. Their shield measures about fourteen inches in diameter, and is usually attached by a leathern thong to the sword. The best kind, made from the skin of the hippopotamus, are brought from Abyssinia. Those who accompany the Sheïkh on horseback, carry with them a lance about fifteen feet in length, ornamented near the end with a tuft of feathers.

In their diet the Sheïkhs and superior classes partake of a great variety of dishes, which are cooked after the Persian mode. Kid, mutton, and camel's flesh—all these are somewhat dear, and the cost of a Sheïkh's table, where hospitality is so freely dispensed, must be very considerable. In addition to these articles, rice, and large quantities of ghí or clarified butter, are principally consumed. The chief food of the poorer, and even the middle classes, consists of dates and fish; both so cheap and plentiful, that even their cattle are fed on them. The common

people use very little animal food, but they have not the same aversion to beef as the inhabitants of Hejas and Yemen. They are also very fond of wheaten bread made into thin cakes, and toasted on the embers of their fire, or baked in ovens, built up in the shape of a jar. These it requires but a small quantity of fuel to heat, and the cakes are placed against the sides: very little dhurrah is eaten, as the natives say it produces flatulence and indigestion. Their corn is reduced to meal by the hand-mill which is so common in all parts of the East, and found even in Scotland, where it is called a quern. It probably may be considered the most primitive kind of mill in the world, consisting simply of a couple of circular stones, about two feet in diameter. The upper one is convex, and has a handle, the lower concave. The grist is supplied through an aperture in the former, which is whirled briskly round by the hand. Females are generally employed in this duty: the operation is slow, and more is not usually ground in a day than suffices for consumption during that period: the usual time for working it is in the morning, when

they accompany the operation by a not unpleasing song.

Of fruit, which is produced in such abundance, they partake but sparingly; but seem extremely fond of sugar-cane, large quantities of which are daily sold at the market.

Of fish, the largest, such as the shark and dolphin, are, by some strange perversion of taste, the most valued.

In the country, females go with their faces uncovered; but at Maskat they wear a singular description of veil of an oblong form, about ten inches in length, and seven in breadth, embroidered with a gold border. In the middle, so as to cross in a vertical direction immediately over the nose, there is a piece of whalebone answering as a stiffener; and on either side of this two small apertures, through which they obtain a view of passing objects. Among the lower classes, their dress otherwise consists of a loose pair of drawers, with a running girdle, and a large gown or skirt of blue cotton; their arms and ankles are decorated with bracelets and ankle-rings of silver or amber; and in their ears they wear a variety of rings and other ornaments. The dress of the more respectable females is quite

as simple, but the materials are silk of Indian manufacture; and over the gown, when abroad, they wear a large wrapper. They display their love of finery in the gold ornaments with which they decorate their heads. A singular custom also prevails of staining the entire person with henna. Shenna, a moss collected from the granite mountains in the Island of Socotra, is also used for a similar purpose. In addition to this, the lower classes aim at further enhancing their claims to personal beauty by exhibiting on their arms and faces various tattoo devices of a blue colour.

In their persons the females are tall and well made, with a roundness and fulness of figure, not, however, approaching to corpulency. Their complexion is not darker than that of a Spanish brunette, and we may infer that this is their natural colour, since, excepting in the morning and evening, those who reside in the oases rarely leave their date groves, and in the towns they preserve their complexions with the same care. On the other hand, the Bedowin women, who are constantly exposed to the rays of the sun, are very swarthy; and the same is observed of the men, although the children are equally

fair at their birth. The expression of their countenance is very pleasing; their eyes being large, vivacious, and sparkling; their nose somewhat aquiline; the mouth regular; and the teeth of a pearly whiteness. They are, without doubt, in point of personal attraction, superior to any other class which I have seen in Arabia. Of a gay and sprightly disposition, the smile of mirth constantly plays about their features; and any witty allusion in their conversation with each other, or ludicrous incident, however trifling, is sufficient to excite their laughter.

In the towns near the sea-coast, females of condition are secluded with as much care as in any other part of the eastern world; but the practice is optional with themselves, and they take the liberty of dispensing with it when they please. At the house of an Arab merchant whom I was in the habit of visiting, it was found impossible to restrain the curiosity of the females of his harem, who, desirous of seeing an European, were constantly flitting before the door of the apartment in which we were seated. My friend bore this with patience for some time, and strove by

remonstrances to prevent it; but finding those ineffectual, he watched his opportunity when I next made my appearance, and turned the key of the harem upon the whole of them; but such an outrageous clamour was immediately raised by its inmates, that he was but too happy before I went away to release them. There is indeed but little doubt that the Mohammedan ladies in Omán enjoy more liberty, and at the same time are more respected, than in any other eastern country. During civil commotions, they often take a part in public affairs, and in some instances have displayed the utmost heroism.

Amidst the most striking features in the condition of this interesting and singular race stands their Sheïkh government, which, in its constitution and operative effects, is a political phenomenon in the history of nations. Although neither a republic, an aristocracy, nor a kingdom, it nevertheless possesses the elements of them all; and when we consider the ages for which it has endured, the slight degree of political restraint which it imposes on the people, the warriors it has reared and sent forth from time to time from its own uncon-

quered wilds to devastate and ravage other regions, it furnishes a subject worthy our particular attention and study.

Arabia was among the first nations which felt the effects of civilization; and although it was here that the first large societies of men united themselves for mutual protection, yet, by an anomaly in the history of the world, their government has remained with but slight additions to its original simple and patriarchal form, from the earliest periods to which historical information reaches until the present moment. The remark applies especially to the southern part of this vast continent, for we learn by the traditions of the country, and the authority of eastern writers, that shortly after the deluge, a remnant of the few who were saved by divine mercy from that awful catastrophe, settled at Al Akas, in the province of Hadramáut. These were said to have been of the tribe of the son of Uz, the son of Shem, and from this stock Arabia is supposed to have been peopled.

CHAPTER XXII.

Origin of Bedowin Government—Authority of the Patriarchs—Bedowin Warfare — Invasion of Aulius Gallus — Defeat of Persians, Turks, and Egyptians—Policy of Mohammed 'Ali—Causes of the tranquillity of Omán—Power of life and death—Anecdote—Attachment to their Chiefs—Contrast between the Arabs of the Town and of the Desert—Notice of various Tribes—Independence of each other—Transfer of power—Price of blood—The Imám's Government—Court—Titles.

It would be foreign to my present design were I to attempt to discuss in detail the origin and general history of the Bedowin government, the cause of its long continuance, or the circumstances which have induced the surplus population to migrate and carry but a portion of its elements to other parts. A brief abstract will nevertheless be necessary, in order to exhibit the political and physical relation of the two classes, which, as scattered pastoral tribes, or an agricultural and commercial people, inhabit the province of Omán,

and which now, in their filiation, dialect, and advance in civilization, differ so materially from each other, that it has been necessary to treat of them severally.

In the earlier stages of society mankind readily acknowledged obedience to the person to whom they owed their being. By a very natural chain of reasoning we can follow the extension of an authority which was vested in the father of a family over the different branches of it, or, in other words, a tribe. This would continue until the number of the tribe became too unwieldy to follow up their marches, or the scanty pasturage was insufficient for the increased number of their flocks*. It then became necessary that a portion should separate and seek for sustenance in more distant provinces. Age for a time would still continue to confine the authority to the patriarch, or his immediate descendants, who had conducted them in their wanderings; but, as the latter increased in number and ramifications, it must necessarily happen that the heads of the different tribes would select some person (though probably the nearer the parent

* Gen. xiii. 7.

stem the better) who, in their precarious mode of life, had made himself conspicuous by his valour or wisdom, and was adapted to be their leader during war, or to preside in their councils during peace. As they spread forth, they would still view with interest and affection the stock from whom they sprang, and, upon the appearance of a common enemy, would unite themselves by a voluntary and mutual contract to expel him. Should their strength at first be unequal to effect this openly, they fled to their deserts, at all times an impenetrable place of refuge, and from thence never ceased to harass and annoy the invader until they drove him from their country.

How successful their adoption of this natural mode of warfare has ever proved may be gathered from the result of the different invasions which have been directed against them. When Aulius Gallus penetrated from the shores of the Red Sea, the inhabitants, making but a slight resistance, retired before him; but no sooner had they drawn him by these means into the interior, where his troops began to be wasted by sickness, than they

attacked him with so much fury that he was glad to escape with a miserable remnant into Egypt, and leave Arabia as unconquered as before. In the same manner they rid themselves at a subsequent period of the Persians, who at one time, under Nurshivan, possessed the greater part of their frontier, including Omán; of the Abyssinians, who ravaged Hejas and Yemen; and, finally, of the Turks, who for a period fixed themselves in Yemen.

It remains to be proved whether the wily policy of Mohammed 'Alí, who is supposed to contemplate the subjection of the whole peninsula, will surmount these difficulties. His former success against the Wahhábís affords no criterion by which we can judge; for those sectaries were considered by the more orthodox Arabians as a common enemy; and the union of several Arab tribes with his own troops alone enabled him to bring that war to a successful termination. The late destruction of his army—then well appointed and well commanded—in the Assaïr country would rather induce us to anticipate no better conclusion to his efforts than, as I have just shown, attended those of former invaders.

The yoke which at several periods was imposed on this people proved so partial and endured for so brief a period, that no considerable change was effected in their general character and condition. Arabia, from this cause, as well as its peculiar position, has been exempted from the mighty tempests which have swept the neighbouring nations from the face of the earth, and left us nothing but their names. Even the mission of Mohammed, which shook and subverted the whole of the civilized world, failed to produce any permanent change. A history, therefore, of the whole or any part of Modern Arabia is valuable, since a picture of what they now are will exhibit, with but slight shades of difference, what they ever have been.

Although the Grand Sheïkhs of the principal tribes have in some cases the power of life and death, and also that of declaring war and peace, yet their authority in every instance is considerably abridged by the aged and other influential men of the tribe. In civil and criminal affairs they act rather as arbiters than as judges, and cases of importance are sometimes debated by the whole

tribe. With an authority so limited, I was in a particular degree impressed with the extraordinary care and affection which is generally testified by the tribes of Omán towards their persons. There is, in this respect, a marked difference between these Bedowins and the natives of the sea-coast of Omán and Hadramáut.

A few years ago two vessels richly laden were cast on shore to the east of Roselhad, within the limits of the Beni-Abû-'Alí Bedowins, who with the neighbouring tribe, the Beni Geneba, immediately plundered them. None of the crew were injured. There was a Jew on board who was sick. When he was carried to the shore, a Bedowin took charge of him, and upon his promising to pay a certain number of dollars, engaged to convey him to Maskat. Fearing, however, as he was very sick, that he might die on the road, and that he would then not only lose his reward, but perhaps also get into trouble, the Bedowin stipulated for a written engagement. As the Jew could not write, he dipped his fingers in ink, and left them impressed on the paper. Upon this the British Resident proceeded to

Súr, and sent for the Sheïkh of the former tribe, who resides some distance inland. Fearing the vengeance of the English, whose power he had already too severely felt, if he came, but dreading still more to refuse, he gave an unwilling assent, and proceeded, accompanied by the whole of his tribe, to the sea-beach. When there, they strove by tears and entreaties to dissuade him from his purpose of proceeding to the vessel, under a decided impression, as they explained to me, that he would be carried to Bombay, and imprisoned, as before. Nevertheless, he went, was received with much attention, and, after concluding a treaty, by which he bound himself, under condition of receiving a handsome salvage on future occasions, to collect and take charge of the property of any British vessels wrecked on the shores of his territories, he was again landed. The joy of his tribe, who remained in the greatest terror and anxiety during his absence, now knew no bounds; and, after being nearly suffocated by their anxiety to salute him, he was placed on the shoulders of two of their number, and carried away in triumph.

The Bedowins who traverse the frontiers of Omán, as well as those who occupy the intermediate space between the oases, have lost none of that attachment to a wandering life which characterises them in other parts of Arabia. It is true they acknowledge the authority of the Imám, since their chiefs secure presents by doing so, and nothing can be gained by pursuing an opposite course; but the obedience which is conceded to him does not exceed that rendered by the several minor Sheïkhs to a great Sheïkh, or "Sheïkh of Sheïkhs." He can, as with the agricultural class, command their services during war; but in peace they pursue, without any interference from him, their own nomadic and pastoral habits. Aware of the power which they would obtain over them, could the Bedowins be fixed in towns and villages, or their attention be turned to agricultural pursuits, every encouragement has been offered by the Imáms to induce them to change their habits, nor have they been wholly unsuccessful.

Impure air, irregular diet, and other causes, increase the consumption of life within cities, while the labourers who cul-

tivate the oases are again less healthy than the hardy inhabitants of the Desert. In order to supply these deficiencies, a regular progressive migration must be kept up, or when it fails, as it has done of late years, large tracts of cultivated lands become abandoned. Several instances were, however, related to me of those who had passed from a pastoral to an agricultural state, but who could never forget their Bedowin habits, and frequently after a residence of many years in the oases, would again flee to the Desert. Facilities are afforded by those desirous of employing themselves in the cultivation of the land in Omán, which do not exist in other parts of Arabia, since they are neither kept in poverty nor ruined by the exorbitancy of the taxes.

In the course of this narrative of my travels I have given an account of the Beni Hasan, Beni-Abú-'Alí, and the Beni Geneba Bedowins; it only remains to notice a few others. The Beni Gafári muster eight hundred men: these, with the Yemani and El Arabí, are the most ancient and illustrious of the tribes of Omán. The latter boast

of a descent from the Korísh at Mekka. The Gafári were originally from Nejd, where the parent stem still remains. In the seventeenth century one of their number filled the throne of Omán, and their present chief, Musálim Ibn Massu, still refuses to acknowledge the sovereignty of Sayyid S'aid. I have already noticed that he resides in a castle near to Minau, from whence he occasionally sallies and annoys the surrounding country. The Bení Hasan amount to one thousand men. They live in various towns, but attend only to their camels, and, with the Geneba, the Meyún, and the Bení Katub, are the carriers of Omán. Their wives and slaves occasionally till the ground, but the men would consider it a disgrace to do so.

The Bedowins who occupy the great Western Desert have neither houses nor tents, but live under the shade of trees.

It is by no means held binding here that the son should follow the occupation of his father. The former may sometimes reside in the town, and the latter on the Desert; but however long they may be permanently fixed, they never forget the tribe from which

they sprang; and during the sojourn of Bedowins in Maskat or other towns, they are usually lodged with, and fed by such relatives.

Such are the principal tribes in Omán. I made myself acquainted with the names, number, &c., of upwards of a hundred others, but as they only vary in these respects, it would prove neither interesting nor amusing to give the mere catalogue.

Each of these tribes being governed, in a measure, by its own ruler, acts on ordinary occasions as a civil community independent of its neighbours; but the smaller are commonly under the influence of the larger tribes. Yet this alliance hangs by so slight a thread that the veriest trifle is sufficient to sever it. If dissatisfied with their Sheïkh, or they think they can better themselves, they quit his protection and obtain that of another, very possibly a rival. Thus, their numbers and strength are constantly changing, and the mal-administration of a single individual may reduce his rule over a powerful tribe to that over its mere skeleton. This is one of the principal features in the Sheïkh govern-

ment, and it is one to which they are indebted for a considerable portion of the liberty they enjoy. From their jarring interests and natural love of strife, they are generally at feud with some one, and if a tribe then finds itself unequal to maintain its position, it connects itself with another, or even with several others. These irregularities, so long as they are confined to themselves, are, in a measure, controlled by that part of their system which renders each particular tribe amenable not only to the Imám, but also to the several other tribes; and in cases where they suffer by any misconduct, and remonstrance is found unavailing, they do not scruple to avenge their wrongs by the sword. But these wars are neither very bloody, nor of very long duration. The price of blood, repugnant as it is to our feelings, seems not without its benefits, for, as compensation after these encounters is made for the slain, men's lives are too valuable to be wantonly destroyed; and the death of a few individuals rarely fails to bring the offending party to reason.

Thus they proceed in affairs amidst them-

selves; but if the matter, from the invasion of the interior tribes, or from other quarters, affects the safety or general interest of the province, the whole body, nomadic and agricultural, professing a common faith, which is regarded with great aversion by all other classes of Mussulmans, and recollecting their common ancestry, unite themselves firmly to deliberate upon and to oppose it. By such an union this isolated race have maintained their independence from the early period at which they first settled in this province, until the present time.

The details which I have given of the Beni-Abú-'Alí Bedowins indicate a deep-felt attachment for their tribe, and how freely they sacrifice life in defence of its fame. Indeed, if we contrast the character of the Bedowin, in general, with that of his neighbours, how immeasurably he stands before them!—his patriotism and natural independence rendering him as far superior to the Persian—a polished slave,—whose best energies are chilled by despotism,—as his superior physical strength, hardihood, and courage, place him before the placid, mild, enervated Hindu

An Arab of the Desert knows and displays this in his behaviour and conversation. He believes himself to be the purest and best of the human race, and it is for the indulgence of these feelings that he infinitely prefers his own wilds to the comparative luxury of an abode in cities. Although disputes constantly occur between Arabs, accompanied by violent behaviour and gesticulations, yet, even in the extremity of anger, they never utter those disgusting epithets so familiar to the natives of India or Persia. An Arab's phraseology is simple and manly: for were he to give vent to expressions directly impeaching his opponent's honour and hospitality or those of his tribe, nothing short of the offender's blood would atone for the insult.

With the exception of Sohar, which has been under the dominion of another chief for some years, the whole of Omán formerly acknowledged the sway of the reigning Imáms; but in 1829, Schinass, and the ports from thence to the northward, threw off the yoke. The former has since returned to his authority, and its fort has admitted a party of Belúchee

soldiers, but the other portion still, in a measure, remains independent of him.

None of the different forms of government in Arabia have excited more attention and discussion in Europe than that of the Imám, which, from its association of spiritual with temporal power, may be compared to that of the Pope. Niebuhr, in his visit to the coast in 1762, has furnished a full description of the constitution of the government of Sana, but that of the prince of Maskat differs in many most essential points: thus, the former rules through the intervention of a divan, which serves greatly to controul his power and abridge his authority; while the latter, although he is content to leave the cognizance of civil affairs to the decision of the Kadi, yet, in all such cases as require his interference, he possesses the free exercise of his own will*.

The rule at present exercised over those provinces of Omán which are subjected to the sway of the Imám of Maskat, is probably

* The title of Imám, implying "Vicar of Mohammed," is ecclesiastical in Arabia, and synonymous with Emir el Nunumîm, or Prince of the Faithful. It appears to have been assumed by the successors of the Prophet.

more mild, equable, and regular, than any other in Arabia, or perhaps any native dynasty of the East.

Yet, with all his able qualities, the Imám's government has on more than one occasion been placed in the greatest jeopardy. Ever restless, and incessantly on the look-out for some pretext to sanction their giving vent to a natural love of strife, his relations have usually taken advantage of his absence to Zanzibar to carry their views into effect. The defection of Sohar and the northern provinces has already been noticed: and in 1829 a party, headed by his nephew, obtained possession of Máskat, but the British government sent immediate intimation to the Imám of what was passing, and were prepared with ships and men to aid him in the recovery of it. This manifestation was in itself sufficient, when it became known, to arrest the progress of the rebellion; and the leaders, upon the arrival of the Imám, surrendered and threw themselves on his mercy. I believe the imprisonment of his nephew for about a week was the heaviest punishment which he inflicted on any one concerned. These irregularities ap-

pear inseparable from Mohammedan and eastern governments. The son no sooner comes of age than he plots against the father; and as the practice of polygamy has a tendency to confuse the order of succession, which here, as in other parts, is nominally hereditary, rival claimants seek by intrigue to establish and strengthen their cause at an early period, and before the death of the reigning prince. No sooner does this take place, than a general scene of strife and contention arises; the various Bedowin tribes hire themselves to different parties, and the contest lasts until the success of one individual more skilful or powerful than his competitors, obtains the prize. Compensation is then made to the friends of the slain, and things are restored to their original condition. On the death of the present Imám, the government will probably be contested by Saeed Mohammed, his nephew, and Sey'd Hilal, his son, the former of whom he is said to favour. The reigning Imám has also to contend with another difficulty. Omán was formerly portioned out amidst a variety of Sheïkhs, influenced by separate and jarring

interests, and frequently setting the authority of the prince at defiance. Sayyid S'aid has in a measure remedied this, by granting these governments as they become vacant to his own officers, as a reward for military service. But in a country like Arabia, the life of an individual is too short, and the difficulties he has to encounter too great, to enable him to establish a fixed and lasting principle of government. Yet this great prince, with his imperfect means, has done more than could be expected of him; and had he been backed by efficient troops, instead of the most indifferent to be found in Arabia, his career would, in all probability, have been boundless; but their want of bravery has occasionally subjected him to severe defeats.

His enlightened policy has greatly increased the commercial wealth and importance of Maskat, and he has more than doubled the extent of territory which was possessed by his ancestors on the coast of Africa. Beyond the general election of the several Chiefs, the theological discourse which is delivered by the Imám, and his vow to abstain from entering on board ships, no other oaths are required,

nor are there any ceremonies of installation. His court is small, and almost entirely devoid of pomp; Saïd na, "My Lord," is the title by which he is addressed, and those who approach him salute the back of his hand.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Administration of Justice—Family Feuds—Anecdote—Religious Toleration—Districts of Omán—Responsibility of the Sheïkhs—Right of Appeal—Police—Revenge of Injuries—Government Resources—Revenue—The Imám's Household—His Munificent Character—Standing Army—Feudalism in Omán—Population—Towns—Map of Omán.

In the administration of justice at Maskat, the Kadis take cognizance of all minor offences; but the Imám decides those of a graver cast. Although his power in every case is absolute, yet his aversion to the spilling of human blood might form a lesson to more civilized potentates: for murder, and murder alone, is the punishment of death inflicted. In the more distant towns, Sayyid S'aid has found it impracticable to abolish the sanguinary custom (which exists there in common with other parts of Arabia) of the friends of the deceased retaliating on either

the slayer or his relations; but these quarrels are strictly forbidden in Maskat. As, however, they sometimes do occur, notwithstanding the Imám's vigilance, the relations of the person, as in Persia, are allowed their choice of demanding the life of the murderer, or accepting a compensation. At Súr, I saw an old man between seventy and eighty years of age, who constantly carried with him his matchlock loaded and primed; and upon inquiring the cause, was informed that he had a quarrel of this nature on his hands. It is one of the most remarkable traits in the character of the Arabs, that in the following up of these family feuds, they frequently permit years to pass before they have an opportunity of wreaking their vengeance on the individuals concerned. It is strange where religious toleration forms one of the most prominent features of the government, that a Mohammedan is permitted to compound for the death of a Banian, by the payment of a sum of money for the service of the mosque.

Omán is divided into districts, known by various designations, which also apply to their inhabitants. These, as I have just mentioned,

are governed by Sheïkhs, each of whom is responsible to the Imám for the good government of his respective district. All these chiefs acknowledge the supremacy of the Imám; and for rebellion, or withholding supplies of men when called on to furnish them, imprisonment and confiscation of property are inflicted. Sayyid S'aid seems, however, much more desirous to conciliate their esteem by presents, and to secure their co-operation for military purposes and the good order of his dominions, than to prejudice them against his person or his measures. While the attention of the Imám is thus directed to the interest of his dominions generally, the details are left to these chieftains, and the power they possess in their several districts is still in consequence very considerable. It extends over the persons and property of the people, but not to their lives. A right of appeal to the Imám exists in every case, his decision being final and binding. A Sheïkh would therefore find it very difficult to abuse his power, and personal security, as well as the rights of private property, are generally respected by them. They have no regular

police for the maintenance of order; but the military retainers of these chiefs are usually employed for carrying the necessary measures into execution; and as the Imám supports but a small permanent force, the district Sheïkh employs the same individuals for the execution of any order which he receives from him. The inferior Sheïkhs exercise a like authority over their dependents, and the father over his family. Beyond the institutes of the Koran they have no regular code of laws; but when these are strictly administered, they appear admirably adapted to meet the cases which most commonly occur in such a country. It is, however, by no means unusual for the people to avenge their own injuries. The adulterer may be slain by the offended party if caught in the fact, or even within the precincts of his dwelling; and death may be inflicted on a thief, if detected under similar circumstances. No delay takes place in the administration of justice, for when any dispute arises, the parties proceed forthwith to the Kadi, who, after listening patiently to either side, at once decides it. In criminal cases, the offender is appre-

hended by certain officers attached to the court, and sentence, unless the offence be of a nature requiring reference to the Imám, is executed as soon as pronounced. Public women are permitted within all the towns and oases, and no punishment is inflicted on those who obtain their favours, whether Mussulmanns, Jews, or Christians. Notwithstanding the predatory habits of the people, they have a great abhorrence of petty theft; for a second or third offence of this nature mutilation is inflicted.

The resources of the Imám's government consist in the services of the people, and the revenue collected at Maskat. The produce of the soil is a source of no emolument to him. Maskat is indeed the only part of Omán from which he derives any revenue, for not a single dollar comes from the interior provinces; on the contrary, he is compelled during his stay in Arabia to expend considerable sums by way of presents to the Sheïkhs of the various towns and oases. The revenue at Maskat and Matarah arises solely from the customs, no other tax, either on their houses, persons,

or property, being exacted. The customs are farmed to a Banian for the yearly sum of one hundred and sixty-five thousand dollars; and from the African and Persian coasts he receives two hundred thousand more, which gives an aggregate revenue of about three hundred and sixty thousand dollars. The expenses of his household are not great, but he lavishes considerable sums on his ships and in presents. His liberality in the latter respect almost rivals the tales which are told of the Kaliphs of old. All his relations are supported by him, and his presents to strangers who visit him are magnificent in the extreme; and it rarely happens that the poorest Arab is allowed to depart without receiving some token by which he may remember the visit. Bedowins arriving in Maskat are fed at his expense, and when they depart are provided with as much food as they can carry away with them. I was once present when one of the men entrusted with the charge of his horses entered the chamber, and reminded his Highness that when he had been looking at them on the previous even-

ing he received no present. The Imám listened patiently to his tale, and then directed the treasurer to present him with ten dollars. Such generosity is esteemed by the Arabs as the greatest virtue which a prince can possess, while the opposite extreme is held in equal detestation. Speaking of Sayyid S'aid, whose liberality has obtained for him the designation of the second Omar, they observe that he never refuses what is asked from him; and that for the customary offering to a superior so general throughout the East, the Imám usually returns its value one hundred fold; and for any works executed by his order, he pays a higher rate than other individuals.

The only permanent force which the Imám keeps at Maskat is a small body of four hundred men, accoutred in the same manner as the sepoys of India. Some of these are also his domestic slaves, but upon occasions which might require it, he could from Southern Omán collect in three days an army of ten thousand men, and afterwards increase the number to thrice the amount, by the accession of several Bedowin Sheïkhs and their fol-

lowers, who would readily join for the sake of the share in the plunder, and the occasional presents which they obtain from him.

In conclusion, I cannot but notice that, in some of its prominent features, a considerable resemblance may be traced between the present government of Omán and that of the old feudal states in Europe. We have there, in the person of the Imám, the representative of the regal power: the chiefs, on whom he has bestowed governments, as a reward for fighting under his banner when called upon, resemble the feudal barons; while the people, released from all taxes, hold possession of the soil by the same tenure as the ancient vassal, viz., that of military service. A castle or tower is attached to each of these governments; and, whenever the authority of the Imám has not been well supported, the chiefs who held possession of them, like the barons, have called around them their retainers, and bid him open defiance.

Owing to the wandering habits of the Bedowins, it is very difficult to fix with precision the amount of the population of this province; but, during my stay there, I took considerable

pains to obtain an account as accurate as possible. Southern Omán is but thinly peopled, for the whole number, including women and children, does not exceed fifty thousand; but the northern districts are far more populous, and probably contain, including Maskat and Matarah, two hundred and fifty thousand souls, which I am convinced is rather within than above the mark.

The Batna coast, throughout its whole length, is thickly studded with towns and villages; and amidst the valleys, wherever the ground affords a sufficient space for tillage, are found hamlets of ten or twenty houses each.

With the exception of Rostak, which is extensive and well built, there are no towns of any extent in the interior. Many of those which from native information have figured in our maps as large cities, and are even classed by Niebuhr as principalities, do not now rise into more importance than villages or hamlets. The ruins of houses, and the remains of former embankments, denote however both a superior population and more extensive cultivation; but, wherever irrigation

ceases, the course of a few seasons converts the land, however fertile it may have previously been, into a desert.

All the towns, &c. are now situated either within or contiguous to an oasis; and these, with their inhabitants, have been so fully described in the course of this work, that it would neither amuse nor interest the reader were I to recur to them; but, in order to bring any peculiarity or additional information as much as possible into one focus, I have added on the face of the map a brief description of each.

The direction of my several journeys is also pointed out in the map. In order to show the degree of confidence to which this may be entitled, it is necessary I should state that all the principal towns, villages, and oases, are fixed from actual observation; and, with the exception of Rostak, which is placed in the position it occupies from compass bearings, and Bireïmah, the frontier station of the Wahhábís, there is no place of importance in Omán, the geographical site of which has not been correctly determined. And here I may be permitted to observe that, although from

untoward circumstances I was prevented from reaching Der'ayyah; yet, in adding a description of a province equal in extent to Syria to the scanty knowledge of Arabia which we previously possessed, I trust it will be apparent that the several months I remained there were neither inactively nor unprofitably employed.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Habitations—Architecture—Interior of the Houses—The Hareem—Slave-trade—The Imám's consent to its Abandonment—Reflections—Description and Amount of Slaves—How distinguished—Value—Kind Treatment—Punishment—Household Slaves—Education of Slaves—Historical Account of Omán—Our political Relations with its Prince—Russian Invasion of India—By what Route—Importance of an intimate Alliance with the Imám—His Navy—Port of Maskat—Ungenerous Behaviour of the British Government—Conclusion.

With the exception of Maskat and Rosták, where they are constructed of stone, the houses throughout Omán are built either with sun-dried bricks or loose stones cemented with mud. They are, in consequence, far from desirable edifices, and a smart shower of some continuance scarcely fails to level many of them. As some protection from these accidents they use a cement composed of mud, straw, and pebbles, which is smoothed and consolidated by the hand alone. The larger sort of houses are of a square form, and

built round an open court. Around each floor there runs a gallery, into which the several apartments open. These are usually spacious and lofty, with ceilings of wood, often painted in rude devices. The walls, which are whitewashed, are formed of cane; and around them on pegs hang their horse and camel trappings. They make their floors of earth smoothed and hardened by rollers, and usually cover them with a mat; but no furniture of any description is seen in their rooms, their meals being taken on a carpet spread for the purpose. These houses have but one entrance; they are surrounded by a wall, and seem designed to serve as places of defence. The dwellings of the poorer classes are of the same materials, and consist of only two square rooms, one above the other—the upper one answering for their hareem, and the under for the reception of visitors.

Maskat is a great mart for slaves: nearly all those required for the supply of the shores of the Persian Gulf, Baghdad, and Basrah, are purchased here. The Imáms formerly engaged in this traffic, and realized thereby an annual revenue of sixty thousand dollars,

or about thirteen thousand pounds; but Sayyid S'aid, in order to gratify our Government, who were then earnest in their endeavours to suppress the trade, with unprecedented liberality gratuitously abandoned the whole. For this he has received no equivalent. Is this generous? is it just? To Spain, a Christian Government, we gave two hundred thousand pounds for a similar abandonment, and remitted some millions of their debt; yet, to a Mohammedan prince, professing a faith which openly sanctions, if it does not actually enjoin, slavery, we have given—our acknowledgments!—at least, I hope we have, though I have never heard of any. *Proh pudor!* Let not England, who has hitherto stood forward in a cause which may be said to have elevated beyond all others the age in which we live, and to have stamped it with a die inscriptive of the purest practical essence of Christianity, be outrivalled in generosity by the ruler of a remote part of Arabia!

I am informed that at Maskat about four thousand slaves, of both sexes and all ages, are disposed of annually. They may be divided into three classes: the Towáylee, from

the Zanzibar coast, who are known by having their teeth filed, sometimes to a point, and sometimes in notches like those of a saw. They have also some perpendicular incisions on either cheek, made with a penknife when the children are five or six years of age. The scars which remain denote the tribe to which they belong*. The price of a Towáli is from forty to sixty dollars. The Nábí, who come from the interior of Africa, are said to be vindictive and treacherous. The Bedowins, here as in the Hejaz, are the only purchasers. The Gallas, brought from Abyssinia, are highly valued; they fetch from one hundred to one hundred and fifty dollars; the price of the females being about the same as that of the males, and strength, health, and good temper in the latter, are considered as a set-off against the comeliness of the former. They bring eunuchs occasionally from Darfúr, which fetch from two to three hundred dollars, and are mostly purchased by the Persians. It is some alleviation to learn, at the same time that we are made aware of the

* Some remarks on this practice may be found in Mr. R. Lander's Travels.

great extent of the slave-trade in these countries, that they are treated with considerable kindness. In Arabia, indeed, there is but little difference between servitude and slavery; for that can scarcely be deemed compulsatory where, if displeased with his master, the slave can go to the Kädi and demand a public sale. This, however, very rarely occurs: the master's authority extends to selling, exchanging, and punishing them; but he cannot, even for crimes which the law deems worthy of death, inflict that punishment without a public trial. If a master furnishes a slave with a wife, and she bears sons and daughters, the wife and children are sold with the father. Upon the death of the master the slaves are usually set free. The Mohammedan law forbids the making slaves of Mussulmans; but a slave brought up in that faith, who has been once manumitted, can again voluntarily engage himself to another master. Arabs of condition have two or more slaves to assist them in their household establishment, besides others who are placed in situations of trust. In either instance they receive a degree of consideration and kindness which is not always ex-

tended to servants in Europe. When purchased young, they are brought up in the profession of the Mohammedan faith, are taught to read and write, and, when they arrive at a sufficient age, are often placed in command of ships or boats, and intrusted with most valuable cargoes.

During my stay in Omán, I made repeated efforts to obtain information which would enable me to draw up an historical account of the province; but the difficulties in a country where no one commits passing events to paper, are insurmountable. I give the result of my inquiries as far as they went, observing, in passing, that the silence of the Arabians themselves, the natural consequence of their unlettered condition, may, perhaps, be supplied from the annals of their neighbours the Persians *. In a summary of the religious tenets peculiar to this people already given, the reader has seen the motives

* After all, I do not think that my want of success in these researches will be deemed of much consequence. It will be seen, by what I have laid before the reader, that the history of the province presents nothing but a series of petty wars and intestine broils, and our attention is so divided by the number of personages who figure on the stage, that we soon cease to feel an interest in any.

which induced a considerable number of the Prophet's followers to desert their chief, settle in Omán, and choose an Imám or Kalif of their own. This event occurred during the wars in which 'Ali ibn Talib, the son-in-law of Mohammed, was engaged, in order to possess himself of the disputed Kalifat; and these seceders then received the appellation of "Khuwarijites," a term of reproach their sect still retains.

Excepting during the brief sway of the Portuguese, the sovereignty of Omán remained in the family of the Yaharábi el Azad for two hundred and fifty years. I think it will be considered sufficient if I begin with Seïf*.

This Prince, in 1658, drove the Portuguese from Maskat: he took Zanzibar, and several ports on the African, a few on the Persian, and one or two others on the Makran coast, with Bahreïn, Kishm, and many other islands in the Persian Gulf. His descendants lost Bahreïn, which threw off the yoke towards the close of the last century, but

* The genealogy of the preceding Imáms is Seïf ibn Soolţán, Ibn Malik, Ibn Adul Arab, el Yaharábi, ul Uzdé, ul Quaïţáni.

have retained the others. Seïf was succeeded by Sooltan, Mohammed ben Nasr of Ghafári, and Seïf, son of Sooltan.

The reign of Seïf was stormy and unhappy. He deviated from those mild principles of government which had distinguished the reigns of his predecessors, and not only oppressed his subjects himself, but permitted his soldiers to plunder and annoy them. At the same time he forsook their frugal habits, addicting himself to wine, and other licentious pursuits, and even attempted the chastity of his subjects' daughters. His cousins, the elders of his tribe, reasoned with him in vain, until, finding the whole country was thrown into confusion, and that his subjects were gradually becoming more disaffected, they at length wrote to Ahmed ibn Ş'aid, the chief of Sohar, who bore the reputation of being the most politic of the princes of Omán. They stated that it was their intention to depose Seïf, and elect Sooltan ibn Murshid, one of the same family, in his room, and required his sanction and co-operation. Ahmed replied that he should in nowise oppose their resolves, add-

ing that, since the present Prince had shewn himself unworthy of their confidence, he would render allegiance to any person whom they might deem most fitting to succeed him. Before the plot was ripe for execution, Seïf became in some manner acquainted with it. In the first transports of his rage he slew all those within his reach, and imprisoned others; but a remnant escaped, and proclaimed Sooltan ibn Murshid to be Imám. The greater part of Omán immediately submitted to this chief, and district after district continuing to fall to him, Seïf at length found himself shut up in Maskat, his only remaining possession. His soldiers, still attached to him, from the greater license given them in the decline of his affairs to rob and plunder the inhabitants, garrisoned the two citadels which command the town, and Sooltan ibn Murshid was unable to approach it. He, however, took possession of the neighbouring town of Matarah, which has also a capacious port, and by reducing the duties, drew so many vessels there, that Seïf, to prevent the utter ruin of Maskat, found himself compelled to solicit assistance

from the Persians, and for this purpose he proceeded in one of his largest ships to Bunder Abbas. Nadir Shah, then King of Persia, who, with a force of ten thousand men, some months before, had made an unsuccessful attack on that town, immediately acceded to his request, and placed a force under Tíki Khan, nominally at his disposal; but that general, at the same time, was instructed to lose no opportunity of possessing himself of the whole province. This being accomplished, Seïf returned to Maskat, while the Persians landed at Rás el Khaïmah. After many conflicts the greater part of Omán surrendered to them, and at length they approached Maskat, but finding their troops were not admitted into the citadels, they invited Seïf to a feast, and having plied him with wine until he was insensible, they attached his signature to a written order, requiring the governors to admit them into their forts. The order was obeyed without demur, and the Persians thus obtained possession without striking a blow. When the unhappy Prince awoke from his intoxication, he found himself betrayed, and, over-

whelmed with the misfortunes which he had brought on himself and his country; in a few months afterwards died of grief. Sooltan ibn Murshid took refuge in Sohar, which had not yet surrendered, but against which the Persians now marched. The Imám was killed in a sortie, but Ahmed ibn S'aid defended himself nobly; and after a protracted siege of eight months, the Persians were constrained to permit him to retain his government, upon condition of acknowledging allegiance to their king. The death of Nadir Shah, which followed a few years after these events, drew great numbers of the invaders to their own country, and Ahmed found little difficulty in ridding himself of the remainder.

This effected, he convened a meeting of the chiefs and elders of the tribes, and reminding them that the government of the country belonged to the Arab family, invited them to name an Imám from that stock, and professed his willingness to obey whomsoever they might nominate. Mohammed ibn Sooltan then arose, and said that none could advance superior claims to those of the individual who had rescued his country from the yoke of foreign

ers, and taking Ahmed by the hand he proclaimed him Imám; which election was joyfully acceded to by the others, and ratified by the general voice of the people. But Ahmed was not destined to hold his office without a struggle. Bel Arab el Kamyar, a relation of Murshid, and Prince of Gabrín, when the intelligence was conveyed to him, immediately marched against the new Imám. After much skirmishing, Bel Arab was slain by a son of Ahmed. By marrying himself to a daughter of Seïf, Ahmed allied himself to the former dynasty, and gave his offspring additional claims to the sovereignty of the country.

An account of the fortunes and fate of the progeny of this prince may not at first sight appear very inviting; but I have inserted it, since it appears to me to furnish a more faithful picture of the interminable dissensions which the Mohammedan system entails on Eastern governments, than could be conveyed to the mind by the most elaborate disquisition.

Ahmed dying, left five sons—viz., Seïf, Kís, Sooltan, Talib, and Mohammed. Kís

was chief of Sohar during his father's life-time, and also at the time of his death. Seïf, the heir apparent, was elected Imám on the decease of his father, and had a son called Ahmed, a wise prince, who conducted the affairs of his father's government. Ahmed, however, died, and the government then fell into such confusion, that the chiefs made Sooltan Imám; but he was slain by the Johasm pirates, and Kís sought to be chosen in his room. Sooltan, however, had left two sons, the eldest, S'aid, who is now Imám, and Salem. Budr, the son of Seïf, had left his own country and joined the Wahhábís; but when he heard of the death of Sooltan, he quitted Heraïyat, and became the guest of his two cousins, who treated him with much attention, and it was agreed they should remain on terms of amity. They then attacked Kís, their uncle, and drove him back to his own government of Sohar; but as it subsequently appeared that Budr had great influence with the several Arab tribes, they were desirous of seeing him made Imám. He even concluded a treaty with the Wahhábís, by which he engaged to pay an annual

sum of 50,000 dollars, and to hold Omán as a tributary possession to their chief. It at length became apparent that his death would alone ensure Sayyid S'aid's throne and personal security; and he contrived to have him assassinated at a small village named Namhán, not far from Burka, on the sea-coast. But although he thus rid himself of his formidable rival, Sayyid S'aid was not yet left to enjoy Omán without a struggle. Budr had previously concluded a treaty with Saoud, by which he stipulated to hold the province as tributary to that prince. This treaty Sayyid S'aid now refused to ratify; and, in consequence, the Wahhábí Chieftain despatched a body of 4000 men, under a warlike and enterprising chief, Sayyid ibn Matlack, to enforce it. A series of petty warfare continued, with varied success, for some years, and the fortunes of Sayyid S'aid were at one time so low, that he was compelled to solicit the aid of the Persians; but eventually the death of his formidable opponent, followed by that of Saoud, and the general dispersion of the Wahhábís, left him in undisturbed possession of his dominions.

I cannot conclude the foregoing slight historical sketch without referring to the state of our present political relations with this Prince. The fears which have been so long entertained with respect to the advance of the Russians on our Indian possessions have induced us to regard with peculiar interest the various routes by which it is probable they might approach them. The Russian frontier now extends to within 120 miles of the sources of the Euphrates; and our late investigation of that river has shown that the passage of an army along its banks to the shores of the Persian Gulf might be accomplished without any considerable difficulty. It has here, as with the Red Sea, without due reflection, been suggested that a sufficient number of vessels could not be obtained to convey any considerable body of troops to India. I have little doubt Sayyid S'aid could collect enough of transports to convey an army of 20,000 men. His navy consists of four heavy frigates, two of fifty guns; three corvettes, from twenty-two to eighteen guns; and several smaller vessels of war. To these he might add his own merchant ships; those under

Arab colours constantly trading to this port; and beyond all, on account of their great number, the services of the native boats or bagalás, some of which are upwards of 200 tons. The port of Maskat might, in a short time, in the hands of a skilful engineer, be made almost impregnable. Its situation commands the entrance to the Persian Gulf, and its harbours would offer shelter to any number of ships.

Whenever Russia strikes a blow, it will be done suddenly. We will not ask where this is most likely to be aimed, our duty is rather to guard every point to which it might be directed. The ships of the Imám of Maskat are constantly traversing the Persian Gulf. But one or two small vessels of twelve or eighteen guns are often the only force we have there. What is there then to prevent his squadron from forming a junction at some preconcerted period with the Russians at Basrah? This might be effected long before our naval force in India could be got together, or even if well arranged, almost before intelligence of such event could be conveyed to head quarters. Nor should it be forgotten, at

certain seasons, that a month is the least period in which vessels proceeding from India can reach Maskat. In possession of the Imám's navy, the ships* of which are as well constructed and as well appointed as those of Her Majesty, and manned with Russian seamen, they would possess a force that would for some period give them the naval superiority in the Indian seas.

With a power that may be wielded, if not precisely in this manner, yet in some other equally to our disadvantage, let us now inquire what are our present relations with respect to this prince. A reciprocal treaty of mutual alliance, defensive and offensive, was entered into with him, in which it was stipulated in Eastern phraseology that "his enemies should be our enemies, and his friends our friends;" and up to this feeling we have, until very lately, acted. But when the probability of our aid being solicited by this prince came a short time ago before the Supreme Government of India, the passage of the treaty which I have given being con-

* Built in the dockyard at Bombay, and stored, &c., direct from England.

sidered by them only in the light of an Eastern compliment, it was directed that no assistance should be afforded him, and the Bombay government have not therefore the authority to send a single vessel to the aid of one of their oldest and most faithful of allies. The sacrifice of so considerable a portion of his revenue to meet our wishes with respect to the slave trade, and his offer even to cede to us his territories in Zanzibar, for the furtherance of the same object, might, with many other instances, be adduced in proof of his sincere devotion to us. The knowledge that he possessed the support of the British Government has hitherto preserved his dominions to him; and was it for certainty known that these would be withdrawn, Omán would speedily be overrun by the Wahhábís, who are in intimate connexion with the Johásmí pirates, and who, once in possession of Maskat, might prove most troublesome neighbours. I think it can therefore admit of no doubt that the wisest, most politic, and most just line of action, which we can pursue in reference to this prince, would be to make our naval force, as with the native princes of

India, in a measure subsidiary to his own, by which, without incurring any additional expense, we should at all times have a powerful armament at our command, in a quarter where it may prove of such vital importance, which could always, when required, be furnished from India with European seamen, where at present we have but a trifling force, and where, if the Omán government should fall into other hands, we might for a time have a most dangerous foe.

The magnificent seventy-four which his Highness presented but a few months since to his late Majesty had for its object, as he explained to me, his allying himself more closely with us; and I have not the slightest doubt but that whenever the above proposal is made to him, he will embrace it with the utmost willingness.

I conclude my observations on Omán with the detail of a short journey which I undertook in search of some inscriptions within the neighbouring province of Hydrámaut.

CHAPTER XXV.

Rás ul Aseïda—Start for Nakab el Hajar—Shells—Diyabi Bedowins—Shifting Sands—Excessive Heat—Ill behaviour of Guides—Caravanserai—Difference in Strength and Speed of Camels—Arák Trees—Curiosity of Natives—Kindness of an old Arab woman—Author recognised as an Englishman.

DURING our survey of the south coast of Arabia, while near the tower called Bá-'l-haff, on the sandy cape of Rás ul Aseïda, in latitude 13° 57′ north, longitude 46¾° east nearly, the Bedowins brought me intelligence that extensive ruins, which they described as having been erected by infidels, and of great antiquity, were to be found at some distance from the coast. I was in consequence most anxious to visit them, but the several days we remained passed away, bringing nothing but empty promises on the part of Hámed, the officer in charge of the tower, to procure us camels and guides; and at length,

in the prosecution of her survey, the ship sailed to the westward.

On the morning of her departure, April 29th, 1835, hopes were held out to me that if I remained, camels would be procured in the course of the day, to convey us to some inscriptions, but a few hours' distance from the beach; and in this expectation I remained behind with Mr. Cruttenden, a midshipman of the Palinurus, and one of the ship's boats.

Towards noon the camels were brought, and I was then somewhat surprised, after much wrangling among themselves, to hear the Bedowins decline proceeding to the inscriptions, but expressed their readiness to accompany me to the ruins I had before been so desirous of visiting. For this I was then unprepared. I had with me no presents for the Sheïkhs of the different villages through which I had to pass, and only a small sum of money; but what (as regarded our personal safety) was of more moment, Hámed, who had before promised, now declined accompanying me, on the plea of sickness.

It was, however, an opportunity of seeing the country not to be lost, and I determined

at once to place myself under their protection and proceed with them. Accordingly, I despatched my boat to the vessel, with an intimation that I hoped at the expiration of three days, to be at the village of 'Aïn, on the sea-coast, where it could again be sent for me. Having filled our water-skins, at three P.M., accompanied by an ill-looking fellow (styling himself the brother of Hámed) and another Bedowin, we mounted our camels and set forward. The road, after leaving Bá-'l-haff, extends along the shore to the westward. On the beach we saw a great variety of shells; among them the Pinna fragilis, the Solen, the Voluta musica, and several varieties of Olives were the most common. Fragments of red tubular coral, and the branch kind of the white, were also very numerous. Under a dark barn-shaped hill, which we passed to the right, our guides pointed out the remains of an old tower, but as we were told there were no inscriptions, and as its appearance from the ship indicated its being of Arab construction, we did not stay to examine it.

At 4·50 we passed a small fishing village, called Jilleh, consisting of about twenty huts,

rudely constructed with the branches of the date-palm. Along the beach, above high-water mark, the fishermen had hauled up their boats, where they are always permitted to remain, unless required for use. In their construction they differ in no respect from those which I have described in other parts of the coast.

At 7·20, leaving the sea-shore, we wound our way between a broad belt of low sand-hills, and halted for two hours, about three miles from the village of 'Aïn Jowárí, to which one of our guides was despatched, in order to secure a supply of dates, the only food they cared to provide themselves with. Directly he returned we again mounted, and at eleven hours, the loud and deep barking of some dogs announced to us that we were passing the village of 'Aïn Abú Mabúth; but we saw nothing of the inhabitants, and at one hour A.M. halted for the night.

We were now in the territories of the Diyabí Bedowins, who, from their fierce and predatory habits, are held in much dread by the surrounding tribes. Small parties, while crossing this tract, are not unfrequently cut

off, and we were therefore cautioned by our guides to keep a good look-out for their approach. But after spreading our boat-cloaks in the sand, we were little annoyed by any apprehensions of this nature, and slept very soundly until the following morning.

The Diyabí Bedowins possess a great extent of country, and are very numerous and powerful. In their political constitution they differ from any other tribe in this vast peninsula with which I have become acquainted, either personally or by report. Instead of choosing a Sheïkh or Sultan as their representative power, they are split into seven divisions, each governed by a chief, called Abú, who exercises what may be termed a patriarchal authority over them. These chiefs assemble for the discussion of all affairs connected with the general interest of the tribe, their decisions being regulated by a majority of voices. In certain cases this office of Abú is hereditary, but more generally it is filled by individuals whose superior sagacity, experience, and courage entitle them to that distinction. Some peculiar usages also exist among the Diyabí Bedowins, with respect to

depredations committed on the property of each other. The Abú is answerable for all thefts occurring within his own district, and he makes restitution to the injured party, provided the offender be unable to do so. If, on the contrary, the thief has property, the Abú claims for himself a third, in addition to the value of the stolen property, as a further punishment, and compensation for the frequent losses he would otherwise be subjected to. The Diyabís have few spears, and no swords; their arms are a jambír, a match-lock, and a shield: they are otherwise distinguished amidst the neighbouring tribes by the scantiness of their waist-cloths, and for the reputed levity and inconstancy of their females.

Thursday, April 30th. The Bedowins called us at an early hour, and after partaking of some coffee which they had prepared, we shook the sand (in which during the night we had been nearly buried) from our clothes, and at five A.M. at a slow pace again proceeded on our journey.

At seven hours we ascended a ledge about four hundred feet in elevation, from the sum-

mit of which we obtained an extensive but dreary view of the surrounding country. Our route lay along a broad valley, either side being formed by the roots or skirts of a lofty range of mountains. As these extend to the northward they gradually approach each other, and the valley there assumes the aspect of a narrow defile. But on the other hand, the space between our present station and the sea widened, and was crossed by a barrier about thirty miles broad, forming a waste of low sandy hillocks. So loosely is the soil here piled, that the Bedowins assure me that they change their outline, and even shift their position with the prevailing storms. How such enormous masses of moving sand, some of which are based on extensive tracts of indurated clay, could in their present situation thus become heaped together, affords an object of curious inquiry. They rise in sharp ridges, and are all of a horse-shoe form, their convex side to seaward. Our camels found the utmost difficulty in crossing, and the Bedowins were so distressed that we were obliged to stop repeatedly for them. The quantity of water they drank was enormous.

I observed on one occasion a party of four or five finish a skin holding as many gallons.

At eight hours we found the sun so oppressive, that the Bedowins halted in a shallow valley under the shade of some stunted tamarisk trees. Their scanty foliage would, however, have afforded but slight shelter from the burning heat of the sun's rays, if our guides had not with their daggers dug up or cut off the roots and lower branches, and placed them at the top of the tree. Having done so, they quietly took possession of the most shady spots, and left us to shift the best way we could. Within these burning hollows the sun's rays are concentrated and thrown off as from a mirror; the herbs around were scorched to a cindery blackness; not a cloud obscured the firmament, and the breeze which moaned past us was of a glowing heat, like that escaping from the mouth of a furnace. Our guides dug hollows in the sand, and thrust their blistered feet within them. Although we were not long in availing ourselves of the practical lesson they had taught us, I began to be far from pleased with their churlish behaviour. Every approach I made

towards a good understanding was met by the most ungracious and repulsive return.

They now held frequent conversations with each other apart, of which it was evident we were made the subject,—and they not only refused water, except in quantities which they considered sufficient, but watched our movements so closely, that for a time, I found it impossible to take either notes or sketches.

Without anticipating dangers, still it was impossible not to feel that our situation must have been a critical one, had these men played us false. I knew that the natives of this district are considered especially hostile to those of a different creed; and that they had some years ago cut off the whole of a boat's crew of the only vessel that had previously touched on their coast, by seducing them with promises from the beach; I could not, therefore, but accuse myself of rashness, in thus venturing with no better pledge for our safety than their promised fidelity. There was, however, but little time for such reflections, and without evincing any change or mistrust in my manner, I determined to watch their conduct narrowly, and to lose

sight of nothing which might be turned to our advantage.

At 10·30 our journey continued over the same sandy mounts as before; and at 1·30 we passed a sandstone hill called Jebel Másinah. The upper part of this eminence forms a narrow ridge, so nearly resembling ruins, that it was not until my return we were convinced to the contrary. We now left the sandy mounds, and crossed over table ridges elevated about two hundred feet from the plains below, and intersected by numerous valleys, the beds of former torrents, which had escaped from the mountains on either hand. The surface of the hills was strewn with various sized fragments of quartz and jasper, several of which exhibited a very pleasing variety of colours.

The only rocks we found in the valleys were a few rounded masses of primitive cream-coloured limestone, of which formation are the mountains on either hand, and which is indeed the predominant rock along the whole southern coast of Arabia.

A few stunted acacias now first made their appearance, which continued to increase in

size as we advanced. At four P.M. we descended into Wádí Meïfah, and halted near a well of good light water. The change which a few draughts produced in the before drooping appearance of our camels was most extraordinary. Before we arrived, they were stumbling and staggering at every step; they breathed quick and audibly, and displayed other symptoms of exhaustion; but on arriving near the water, they approached it at a round pace, and appeared to imbibe renovated vigour with every draught. Then, after browsing for an hour on the tender shoots of the surrounding trees, they left as fresh as when we first started from the sea-coast. Notwithstanding the excessive heat of the day, and the heavy nature of the road, it may appear strange that these animals should have been so much distressed in crossing a tract of only forty miles. Camels however differ in Arabia, in point of strength and speed, more than is generally supposed. The animals we rode during this journey bore about the same resemblance to those on which I journeyed from 'Aden to Láhesdjí, as a first-rate hunter would to a post-horse in England. Whilst we

loitered near these wells, an Arab brought several fine bullocks to water. They had the hump observable in those of India, to which, in size and colour, as well as in the stunted growth of their horns, they bear a great resemblance.

Arák trees were very numerous, but taller, larger, and of a different species to those found on the sea-coast *. The camels ate greedily of those we found here, though they never feed on the latter unless pressed by hunger. This tree, common to Arabia, Abyssinia, and Nubia, is found in many places along the shores of the Red Sea, and the southern coast of Socotra abounds with it. Its foliage is of a lively green, which sends forth a most fragrant odour at certain seasons. The Arabs make tooth-brushes of the smaller branches, which they dispose of at Mecca and other parts of the East.

We observed also many tamarisks and acacias intermingling their branches with the other trees growing on this spot; the whole, at this season, putting forth young buds and

* The former is the Salvadora Persica, well described by Forskall as the Cissus Arborea; the latter is the Avecennia nitida. —*Delille, Voy. en Arabie de Léon la Borde.*

shoots; so that after our journey over a dreary waste of burning sand, their verdure was an inexpressible relief to the eye.

At five P.M., again mounting our camels, we continued in a west-north-westerly direction along the valley. It is about one mile and a half in width, and the bank on either side, with the ground over which we were passing, afforded abundant evidence of its having been the bed of a powerful stream but a short time previous. The country also begins to assume a far different aspect. Numerous hamlets, interspersed amidst extensive date groves, verdant fields of jowari, and herds of sleek cattle, show themselves in every direction, and we now fell in with parties of inhabitants for the first time since leaving the sea-shore. Astonishment was depicted on their countenances, but as we did not halt, they had no opportunity of gratifying their curiosity by gazing at us for any length of time. But to compensate for their disappointment, one of our party remained behind, to communicate what he knew of us. In answer to the usual queries, who we were? were we Mussulmans? what was the nature

of our business, &c.? his reply was, that we were Káfirs going to visit Nakab el Hajar, in order to seek for treasure. Others he gratified with the intelligence that we arrived here to examine and report on their country, of which we were desirous of obtaining possession. In vain I endeavoured to impose silence, he laughed outright at my expostulation; while our guides, either disliking to be seen in our company, or having some business of their own, left us the instant we arrived near the village.

They returned shortly after sunset, and we were preparing to halt near a small hamlet, when the inhabitants sent a message, requesting they would remove us from the vicinity of their habitations. Remonstrances or resistance, except on the part of our guides, who remained quiet spectators of all which was passing without an attempt at interference, would have been equally vain, and we were consequently obliged to submit.

Being now dark, it became evident that our guides had but an imperfect idea of the road, for we had not proceeded more than three or four miles, when we found ourselves

climbing over the high embankments which enclose the jowarí fields. The camels fell so frequently while crossing these boundaries, that at length the Bedowins, affecting to lose all patience, took their departure, and left us with them, an old man, and a little boy, to shift for ourselves. I should have cared the less for this, if before stealing off they had acquainted the latter with their destination, but they had not condescended to do so, and we were preparing to take up our quarters in the fields. Unexpectedly, however, we fell in with an old woman, who, as soon as she was informed of our situation, without the slightest hesitation promised to conduct us to her house. We gladly followed her, but having wandered far from the path, we did not arrive there until midnight.

We found our guides comfortably seated within á house, smoking their pipes and drinking coffee. Though excessively provoked, I was aware that remonstrance would be useless; and concealing my chagrin, I proceeded to secure a lodging for the night. But a large party had got there before us, and having taken possession of every apart-

ment, were busily engaged with their pipes and coffee.

It appears we had arrived at a sort of caravanserai, one or more of which are usually found in the towns of Yemen, as in other parts of the East. We therefore requested the old lady, whose kindness did not abate when she heard we were Christians, to remove the camels from the court-yard, and there, after a hearty supper of dates and milk, we slept very soundly until about three o'clock, when we were awakened by finding our guides rummaging our baggage for coffee. At any other period I should probably have been amused at witnessing the unceremonious manner in which they proposed helping themselves, as well as the nonchalance they exhibited in piling, without ceremony, saddles, baskets, or whatever came in their way, upon us. But men are not in the best humour to enjoy a practical joke, when snatching a hasty repose, after a fatiguing day's work; and I, therefore, with as little ceremony as they used to us, peremptorily refused to allow them to remove what they were seeking for. As we anticipated, they took this in high

dudgeon; but their behaviour, unless they had proceeded to actual violence, could not have been much worse than it had been hitherto, and I therefore cared little for such an ebullition.

Friday, 1st May. Although it was quite dark last night when we arrived here, and we could not but be aware, from the state of the ground we had passed over, that there must be abundance of vegetation, yet we were hardly prepared for the scene that opened upon our view at daylight this morning.

The dark verdure of fields of dhurrah *, dokhn †, tobacco, &c., extended as far as my eyes could reach. Mingled with these, we had the soft acacia, and the stately, but more sombre foliage of the date palm; while the creaking of numerous wheels with which the grounds were irrigated, and in the distance, several rude ploughs drawn by oxen; the ruddy and lively appearance of the people, who now flocked towards us from all quarters, and the delightful and refreshing coolness of the morning air, combined to form a scene, which he who gazes on the barren aspect of the coast, could never anticipate.

* Sorghum vulgare. † Sorghum saccharatum.

At six A.M. we again mounted our camels, and passing in succession the villages of Sahún, Gharígah, and Jewel Sheïkh, arrived at another small village, where we had been led to anticipate we should meet the Súltan; but finding, to our very great joy, upon inquiry, that he had set off the day before for 'Abbán, we pushed onwards.

Several people stopped us on the road, and saluted us, after the Arab style, with much civility. They appeared perfectly satisfied with the answer our guides now thought proper to give to them, namely, that we were proceeding to their Súltan on business. One man only recognised us in the course of our journey as Englishmen. He was a native of Hydrámáut, who had heard of the English at Shaher, and was impressed with a belief that we were proceeding to purchase Hasan Ghoráb from 'Ab'd-ul-Wáhid.

At nine hours we passed Mansúrah, and Sa'íd, and arrived at Jewel Agil, one of the largest hamlets of the group. Leaving several other villages to the left, we now passed over a hill about two hundred feet in height, composed of a reddish-coloured sandstone. From the summit of this, the ruins we sought were

pointed out to us. As their vicinity was said to be infested with robbers, we were obliged to halt at a village, in order to obtain one of its inhabitants to accompany us to them. Our guides, as usual, having gone to seek shelter from the heat of the sun, had left us to make our breakfast on dates and water, in any sheltered spot we could find. The sun was nearly vertical, and the walls of the houses afforded us no protection. Seeing this, several of the inhabitants came forward, and offered with much kindness to take us to their dwellings. We gladly consented, and followed one of them. Coffee was immediately served; and it was with some difficulty, after a promise to return if possible in the evening, that we prevented our host from ordering a meal to be immediately cooked for us.

This circumstance, combined with several others which occurred on our return, convinced me, if we had been provided with a better escort, that after passing the territory of the Diyabís, we should have experienced neither incivility nor unkindness from the people.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Ruins of Nakab el Hajar — Position—Ancient town—Inscriptions—Entrance—Materials used in its Construction—Vast Solidity—Interior—Excellent Masonry—Well—Antiquarian Remains — Anecdote — General Observations — Burckhardt—Origin of Nakab el Hajar—Fertility of surrounding District—Kind Reception from Natives—Best mode of penetrating into the Interior—Return to the Ship—"Black Mail"—Anecdote of Diyabí Bedowins.

ABOUT an hour from the last village we arrived at the ruins of Nakab el Hajar *, and a rapid glance soon convinced me, that their examination would more than compensate for any fatigue or danger we had encountered on our road to them.

The hill upon which they are situated, stands out in the centre of the valley, and divides a stream which passes, during floods, on either side of it. It is nearly eight hundred yards in length, and about three hundred and fifty yards at its extreme breadth. The

* Nakab el hajar signifies "the excavation from the rock."

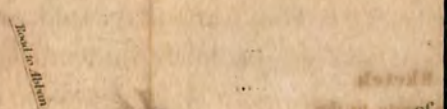
direction of its greatest length is from east to west. Crossing diagonally, there is a shallow valley, dividing it into two nearly equal portions, which swell into an oval form. About a third of the height from its base, a massive wall, averaging in those places where it remains entire, from thirty to forty feet in height, is carried completely round the eminence, and flanked by square towers, erected at equal distances. There are but two entrances situated north and south from each other, at the termination of the valley before mentioned. A hollow square tower, each side measuring fourteen feet, stands on both sides of these. Their bases extend to the plain below, and are carried out considerably beyond the rest of the building. Between the towers, at an elevation of twenty feet from the plain, there is an oblong platform which projects about eighteen feet without, and as much within the walls. A flight of steps was apparently once attached to either extremity of the building, although now all traces of them have disappeared. This level space is roofed with flat stones of massive dimensions, resting on transverse walls. It is somewhat

singular that we could not trace any indication of gates. The southern entrance has fallen much to decay, but the northern remains in almost a perfect state. The sketch on the map will illustrate its appearance and dimensions better than any verbal description.

Within the entrance, at an elevation of ten feet from the platform, we found the inscriptions. They are executed with extreme care, in two horizontal lines on the smooth face of the stones of the building, the letters being eight inches long. Attempts have been made, though without success, to obliterate them. From the conspicuous situation which they occupy, there can be but little doubt, but that when deciphered, they will be found to contain the name of the founder of the building, as well as the date, and purport of its erection. The whole of the wall, the towers, and some of the edifices within, are built of the same material, viz., a compact greyish-coloured marble, streaked with thin dark veins and speckles, and hewn to the required shape with the utmost nicety. The dimensions of the slabs at the base of the walls and towers were from five to six and

RUINS of NAKAB AL HAJA

Entrance on which is the following Inscr



Road to Akbah

of

RUINS OF

on the

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seven feet in length, from two feet ten inches to three feet in height, and from three to four in breadth. These decrease in size with the same regularity to the summit, where their breadth is not more than half that of those below, where the thickness of the wall, though I did not measure it, cannot be less than ten feet, and, as far as I could judge, about four at the summit. Notwithstanding the irregularity of its foundation, the stones are invariably placed in the same horizontal lines, carefully cemented with mortar, which has acquired a hardness almost equal to that of the stone. Such parts of the wall as remain standing, are admirably knitted together; others which, by the crumbling away of their bases, incline towards their fall, still adhere in their tottering state without fracture; and those patches which have fallen, are scattered around in huge undissevered masses. There are no openings in these walls, no turrets at the upper part,—the whole wears the same stable, uniform, and solid appearance. In order to prevent the mountain torrent, which leaves on the face of the surrounding country evident traces

of the rapidity of its course, from washing away the base of the hill, several buttresses of a circular form have been hewn from that part, and cased with a harder stone. The casing has partially disappeared, but the buttresses still remain.

Let us now visit the interior, where the most conspicuous object is an oblong square building, the walls of which face the cardinal points. Its largest size, fronting the north and south, measures twenty-seven yards. The shorter, facing the eastward, seventeen yards. The walls are fronted with a kind of free-stone, each slab being cut of the same size, and the whole so beautifully put together, that I endeavoured in vain to insert the blade of a small penknife between them. The outer unpolished surface is covered with small chisel marks, which the Bedowins have mistaken for writing. From the extreme care displayed in the construction of this building, I have no doubt that it is a temple, and my disappointment at finding the interior filled up with the ruins of the fallen roof was very great. Had it remained entire, we might have obtained some clue to

guide us in our researches respecting the form of religion professed by the earlier Arabs. Above and beyond this building there are several other edifices, with nothing peculiar in their form or appearance. Nearly midway between the two gates, there is a circular well ten feet in diameter, and sixty in depth. The sides are lined with unhewn stones, and either to protect it from the sun's rays, or to serve some process of drawing the water, a wall of a cylindrical form, fifteen feet in height, has been carried round it.

On the southern mound we were not able to make any discoveries, as the whole presents an undistinguishable mass of ruins. Within the southern entrance, on the same level with the platform, a gallery four feet in breadth, protected on the inner side by a strong parapet, and on the outer by the principal wall, extends for a distance of about fifty yards. I am unable to ascertain what purpose this could have served. In no portion of the ruins have we succeeded in tracing any remains of arches or columns, nor could we discover on their surface any of

those fragments of pottery, coloured glass, or metals, which are always found in old Egyptian towns, and which I also saw on those we discovered upon the north-west coast of Arabia. Except the attempts to deface the inscriptions I have before noticed, there is no other appearance of the building having suffered from any ravages besides those of time; and owing to the dryness of the climate, as well as the hardness of the material, every stone, even to the marking of the chisel, remains as perfect as the day it was hewn. We were naturally anxious to ascertain if the Arabs had preserved any tradition concerning their buildings, but they refer them, in common with the others we have fallen in with, to their Pagan ancestors. "Do you believe," said one of the Bedowins to me, upon my telling him that his ancestors were then capable of greater works than themselves, "that these stones were raised by the unassisted hands of the Káfirs? No! no! they had devils, legions of devils, (God preserve us from them!) to aid them." A superstition generally credited by others.

The guides followed us during our stroll

over the ruins, in expectation of sharing in the golden hoards, which they would not but remain convinced we had come to discover. When, as they supposed, they found us unsuccessful in the search, they consoled themselves with the reflection that we had not been able to draw them from the spirits, who, according to their belief, kept continual watch.

The ruins of Nakab el Hajar, considered by themselves, present nothing more than a mass of ruins surrounded by a wall. But the magnitude of the stones used in its construction, and the perfect knowledge of the builder's art, exhibited in the style and mode of placing them together, with its towers, and great extent, would give it importance in any other part of the world. Here in Arabia, where, as far as is known, architectural remains are of rare occurrence, its appearance excites the liveliest interest. That it owes its origin to a very remote antiquity (how remote it is to be hoped the inscription will determine,) is evident by its appearance alone, which bears a strong resemblance to similar edifices which have been found amidst Egyp-

tian ruins. We have (as in them) the same inclination in the walls, the same form of entrance, and the same flat roof of stones. Its situation, and the mode in which the interior is laid out, seem to indicate that it served both as a magazine and a fort. I think, therefore, we may with safety adopt the conclusion that Nakab el Hajar, and the other castle which we have discovered, were erected during a period when the trade from India flowed through Arabia towards Egypt, and from thence to Europe. Thus Arabia Felix, comprehending Yemen, Sabá, and Hadrámáut, under the splendid dominion of the Sabæan or Homerite* dynasty, seems to have merited the appellation of which she boasted.

The history of these provinces is involved in much obscurity, but Agatharchides, before the Christian era, bears testimony, in glowing colours, to the wealth and luxury of the Sabæans, and his account is heightened rather than moderated by succeeding writers. This people, before Márbe† became the capital of

* The ancient people called Himyarí by the modern Arabs were probably called Homeïrí by their ancestors, as their territory corresponds with that of the Homēritæ of Ptolemy.—*Geogr.* vi. 6.

† The Mariaba of the Greeks.—*Strabo*, xvi., p. 778.

their kingdom, possessed dominion along the whole of the southern frontier of Arabia. We are expressly informed that they planted colonies in situations eligible for trade, and fortified their establishments.

The commerce was not confined to any particular channel; on the contrary, we learn from an early period, of the existence of several flourishing cities, at or near the sea-shore, which must have shared in it. We know nothing of the interior of this remarkable country, but there is every reason to believe, as is most certainly the case with Nakab el Hajar, that these castles will not only point out the tracks which the caravans formerly pursued, but also indicate the natural passes into central Arabia.

The inscription which it has been my good fortune to discover will create considerable interest among the learned.

Burckhardt, while regretting the absence of any information connected with the origin of the civil institutions of the Bedowins, remarks, "that perhaps the discovery of ancient monuments and inscriptions in Nejd and Yemen might lead to a disclosure of new

historical facts connected with this subject." At the period of the promulgation of the Korán, two alphabets were used in Arabia, the Kufic, in which that work was written, expressive of the Korísh dialect, and the Himayáritic, adopted by the people of Yemen*. The latter is now lost to us, and I know not on what grounds certain philologists have conjectured that it bore "a strong affinity to the Ethiopic;" but "when the Korán appeared in the Kufic character the inhabitants of Yemen were unable to read it†." It has frequently been a subject of regret that we were in possession of no inscriptions from the country by which these points might be determined. Niehbur's attention was particularly directed to it, although he was unable during his stay to obtain any: one was shown him at Mokhá, which was copied some distance from the coast, but sickness had so reduced him, that he observes he was then more occupied with thoughts respecting his latter end, than any desire to copy unknown inscriptions; but conjectures, from recollection only, it might have been the Perse-

* Conder's invaluable Modern Traveller. "Arabia." Page 41.

† Ibid., p. 42.

politan, or arrow-headed character; but no resemblance can be traced between this and an inscription since found by Seetzin*, on his road to Saná, nor those which I have given. Owing to the locality in which the latter were found, and for other reasons, I venture to suggest that both they, together with those we discovered at Hassan Ghoráb, are the lost Himayáritic writing. Should this prove correct, the resemblance to the Ethiopic is not conjectural, since a complete identity in many of the characters may be traced †. I am not sufficiently versed in oriental literature to pursue this subject further, and the above remarks are offered with some diffidence. Fac-similes of both, however, have been transmitted to the celebrated Gesennius, at Halle, and as they at present occupy his attention, we may venture to hope that the result will be a successful elucidation.

Nakab el Hajar is situated north-west, and is distant forty-eight miles from the village of ʾAïn, which is marked on the chart in latitude

* Mines d'Orient. p. 282.

† It also bears some similitude to the rude undeciphered characters on the Lát of Fíróz Sháh at Delhí.—*As. Res.* vii. pl. 7—10.

14° 2′ north, and longitude 46° 30′ east nearly. It stands in the centre of a most extensive valley, called by the natives Wádí Meïfah, which, whether we regard its fertility, population, or extent, is the most interesting geographical feature we have yet discovered on the southern coast of Arabia. Taking its length from where it opens out on the sea-coast, to the town of 'Abbán, it is four days' journey, or seventy-five miles. Beyond this point I could not exactly ascertain the extent of its prolongation; various native authorities gave it from five to seven additional days throughout the whole of this space. It is thickly studded with villages, hamlets, and cultivated grounds. In a journey of fifteen miles, we counted more than thirty of the former, besides a great number of single houses.

The date-groves become more numerous as we approach towards the sea-shore, while in the same direction the number of cultivated patches decrease. Few of the villages contain more than from one to two hundred houses, which are of the same form, and constructed of the same material (sun-baked bricks) as those on the sea-coast. I saw no huts, nor were there any stone houses, al-

though several of the villages had more than one mosque, and three or four Sheïkhs' tombs.

More attention appears to be paid within this district to agricultural pursuits, than in any other part of Arabia which I have hitherto seen. The fields are ploughed in furrows, which for neatness and regularity would not shame an English peasant. They carefully free the soil from the few stones strewn over it, and water the whole plentifully morning and evening, from numerous wells. The water is drawn up by camels, (this is a most unusual circumstance, for they are rarely used as draught animals in any part of the East,) and distributed over the face of the country along high embankments. A considerable supply is also retained within these wherever the stream fills its bed. Trees and sometimes even houses are then washed away, but any damage it does is amply compensated by the mud deposited, which, although of a lighter colour and of a harder nature, is yet almost equally productive with that left by the Nile in Egypt. But beyond what I have noticed no other fruits or grain are grown.

Having now made all the necessary observations on the ruins and the surrounding country, our Bedowins, as evening was approaching, became clamorous for us to depart.

About four P.M. we finished loading the camels, and travelled until near sunset, when we halted near one of the villages.

Our reception there was very different from that which we experienced at the first village on our journey from the well. Though about fifty men crowded around us, their curiosity, though much heightened by all they saw, was restrained within the bounds of good taste. The questions they asked respecting our journey were proposed with a degree of delicacy which surprised and pleased me. Milk, water, and firewood were brought to us almost unsolicited, for which we had nothing to return but our thanks. I much regretted on this occasion being unprovided with some trifling presents, which we might have left as a memorial of the Englishman's sojourn among them. What a different impression we might have formed of this people had we drawn our opinion from our guides or our first reception!

Saturday, May 2nd. Starting shortly after

midnight, we travelled until four, but losing our way, halted until daylight. At this time a heavy dew was falling, and Fahrenheit's thermometer stood at 58°; it was consequently so chilly, that we were happy to wrap ourselves up in our boat-cloaks.

At eight hours we again halted at the well to replenish our skins, previous to recrossing the sandy hillocks, and then continued on our journey. From nine A.M. this day, until 1·30, we endured a degree of heat I never felt equalled. Not a breath of wind was stirring, and the glare produced by the white sand felt almost intolerable. At two hours our guides were so much exhausted, that we were obliged to halt for an hour. At 5·30 we arrived at the date-groves, near to 'Aïn Abú Mabuth, where there is a small village, and some fountains of pure water, about fifteen feet square and three deep.

At seven hours we reached the beach, which we followed until we came opposite to the vessel. It was however too late for us to be solicitous about making a signal to those on board for a boat; and I was moreover desirous, from what we overheard between the

Bedowins, who were with us, to defer our departure until the morning. Any disturbance we might have with them had better happen then than during the night. We therefore took up our quarters amidst the sand-hills, where we could light a fire without fear of its being observed by those on board.

It will readily be believed that if we felt fatigued it was not without reason. We had been seventy hours from our station at Bá-l-haff, during forty hours of which we had been mounted on our camels. The whole distance, one hundred and twenty miles, might have been accomplished, on a quick camel, in half that time, and it was our slow pace during the excessive heat of the weather at this season, which formed the most toilsome and tedious part of the journey.

May 3rd. Being discovered at an early hour this morning from the ship, a boat was immediately despatched for us. Strengthened now with her crew, we settled with the Bedowins without any additional demand, and in the course of a few minutes were on board the vessel, where we received the congratulations of all on our return. Considerable apprehension had been entertained for

our safety, when it was discovered that Hamed had not accompanied us.

It was not indeed until afterwards that we ascertained the extreme risk we had encountered on this journey; for the Diyabí Bedowins, finding we had passed through their territory, lay in wait for us, under the impression we should return by the same route. But the ship fortunately took up a second station, about twenty miles to the westward of the former one, and on receiving intelligence of that we returned by another and more direct road to her. Some idea may be formed of the reception destined for us from the following incident:—A few days afterwards, one of our boats was lying at anchor close to the shore; a party of this tribe appeared, and coolly kneeling, took deliberate aim, and fired into her. The midshipman in charge very quickly returned it, but no blood was shed.

The success which has attended this brief journey to the interior will, it is hoped, prove an inducement to others to follow up our researches. Had I been differently situated, I should have proceeded on to 'Abbán, on the road to which there are at a village called

Eïsán ruins of nearly equal magnitude with Nakab el Hajar. But independent of these ancient monuments, in themselves far more than enough to repay the adventure, the condition, character, and pursuits of the inhabitants, the productions, resources, and nature of the country, severally furnish subjects of peculiar interest, and would, there can be no doubt, amply repay the curiosity of the first European who should visit them.

In order to proceed, I imagine nothing more would be necessary than for any individual to procure a letter from the British Government to the Sheïkh of 'Abbán. A guard could be sent to escort him there from the sea-coast, and he could from thence be forwarded to the next Sheïkh by a similar application.

By the assumption of a Mohammedan or even a medical character, and a sacrifice of every species of European comfort, he might, I have very little doubt, penetrate to the very heart of this remarkable country.

APPENDIX TO VOL. I.

Extracts from Letters received from Sayyid Ibn Kalfán, Secretary to the Imám of Maskat.*

MY DEAR SIR, ... Maskat, 26th Dec., 1835.

I am glad to hear of the attention and civility you have met with in the dominions of His Highness; please God you may continue to do so, and succeed in your journey! Your letter to His Highness I have presented this day; and rest assured he is well pleased at hearing you are well satisfied with his subjects.

There is a Chief at Maskat of the tribe of Majárá, who agrees for five hundred dollars to conduct you from Bircïmah to Deray'yah, furnishing you all the way with camels, and a guard of seventy or eighty men. I am now waiting for your answer. There is no other way of crossing the Desert than in this manner with a caravan. You had better, as you suggest, take a Cashmere shawl for Fasil†. I will purchase and send you one.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

SAYYID IBN KALFAN.

* This gentleman, an Arab, was educated in Calcutta, and I have given a literal transcript of his English letters.

† The Imám of the Wahhábís.

My dear Sir, Maskat, February 9th.

With much pleasure I acknowledge the receipt of your most esteemed letter, which reached me on the 4th; happy I am to find you are at Síb, and recovering your health. Sir, the greatest benefit is to gain strength, and this I hear you are gaining; for this, in my daily prayers to Almighty God, I thank him. I explained to His Highness your fever at Neswah: he said "it could not be avoided; that what Almighty God orders must take place." I enclose you a letter from him to the Governor of Síb, which you can read, as it is unsealed. He was quite pleased and happy to hear of your safe arrival at that place.

Yours faithfully,

Sayyid Ibn Kalfan.

Maskat, 17th February, 1836.

I have received your letter this day at 8h. 3′ A.M. I have mentioned the route you intend to pursue, to His Highness; his reply is as follows: "That the road from Suweïk to Obrí is not safe for you; nor to Dharra." Do not run the risk; His Highness deems it *not safe*. The reason is, the Wahhábí tribe arrived from Deray'yah; beyond Sohar, several places have been attacked and burnt; all the people are at present in confusion, particularly in those places connected with Obrí. They plunder and kill each other, and say it is the Wahhábís.

If you are therefore coming to Maskat, you had better get on board some bagalá passing, as the weather is very hot to come by land.

* * * * *

Maskat, Sunday, February 22nd, 1836.

I received your letter last night, and perfectly understand the contents. Your determination to proceed to Obrí, I have told His Highness, and he has therefore given an order this day, that one of his officers is to conduct you to Obrí: viz., by this route he will first call at the town of Suweïk, to the country called Gaïzeïn, of the tribe of Ḥawasanah; the said tribe will conduct you to the country of the Benî Kalbán, who will take you to Obrí, the Yacknali tribe; there you must get them to conduct you to Bireïmah.

The Sheïkh at Bireïmah, Sayyid Ibn Mutluk, will conduct you to Deray'yah. His Highness, to prevent accidents, will write to Bireïmah by your guide, and to the Imám at Deray'yah, that any orders from you for money drawn on him will be accepted and paid.

The Imám has given directions for camels to be furnished to convey you as far as Suweïk, that is, the last dominions of His Highness.

Yours faithfully,

SAYYID IBN KALFAN.

MY DEAR SIR, Maskat, April 6th, 1836.

I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letter, dated Síb, April 5th.

Captain Hennell returned to Maskat in the Coote, and by her I have received several letters for you, which I send with this, without delay.

I never heard of the messengers the Imám despatched for you to Obrí; and I believe they were both murdered by the Wahhábís.

Yours faithfully,

SAYYID IBN KALFAN.

METEOROLOGICAL JOURNAL IN OMAN.

Date.	Locality.	Thermometer. 5h 30′ A.M.	Thermometer. 9h. P.M.	Face of the Country.	Observations on the Weather. 12 o'clock when not otherwise expressed.	Latitude. Observed.
Nov. 28	Súk el Súr	64	66	Plain adjoining a Date-[illegible]station . .	Very Cloudy. Rain to the N.W. Wind South	22° 38′ N.
29	Do.	62	57	. . . . .	Passing Clouds.	
30	Do.	63	66½	. . . . .	Do.	
Dec. 1						
2	Bal el Russoor	..	..	Valley with fresh Water . . .		
3	Cawmil	56	59½	. . . . .	Clear and Fine.	
4	Beni-Abú-Hasan	..	..	Contiguous to a Date Grove . .	Cloudy, with slight Rain	22° 9′
5	Beni-Abú-'Alí	..	..	Do.	Do.	22° 3′
6	Desert	..	..	. . . . .	Do.	
7	Do.	..	..	. . . . .	Clear and Fine.	
8	Do.	..	..	. . . . .	Do.	
9	Beni-Abú-'Alí	..	..	. . . . .	Do. Copious Dew at Nights.	
10	Towards Bedí'ah	60	..	On the border of the Desert . .	Do.	
11	At Bedí'ah	58½	55½	Near a Date Grove, open Country .	Do.	22° 27′
12	. . . . .	58	56	Do. . . . Do. . .		
13	At Ibrah	57	60	In a valley close to fresh Water .	Cloudy	22° 41′
14	Towards Semmed	55	60½	Woody Tract	Fine.	
15	At Semmed	60	63	. . . . .	Do.	22° 50′
16	. . . . .	58	63	. . . . .	Do. Wind South.	
17	. . . . .	57. 11 A.M.	63	2 to 3 o'ck		
18	. . . . .	58. 70	62½	74 in tents	Passing Clouds.	
				10 o'clock	Do. with light showers of Rain.	
19	. . . . .	59½	64	70 In the Valley	Cloudy, with light breeze from the South.	
20	Kothra	58½	63½	72 Open Country near a Date Grove	Fine, Passing Clouds.	
21	Mayul	57	63	Do. Do.	Do. Do.	
22	Minna	58	62	Do. Do.	Fine, 2 P.M. showers of Rain.	
23	Neswah	56	66	70 At the base of Jebel Akhdar .	Fine, Wind N.W., dry and clear . . .	22° 56′
24	. . . . .	57½	66	72	First part fine and clear—4 P.M. squally at N.W.	
25	. . . . .	60	66		Fine	
26	. . . . .	64	53	On the Jebel Akhdar . .	Do.	
27	Shirází	53	..	Do.	Do.	23° 3′
28	. . . . .	50	53	Do.	Do.	
29	. . . . .	50	53½	Do.	Do.	
30	Birket	44½	52	2 to 3 o'ck	Do.	
31	Neswah	50	59	In the Grove	Cloudy.	
Jan. 1	. . . . .	52	57	60	Fine.	
2	. . . . .	54	56	61	Do.	
3	. . . . .	54	55	61	Cloudy.	
4	. . . . .	53½	55½	60	Fine.	
5	. . . . .	52	54	61	Do.	
6	. . . . .	56	54		Do.	
7	. . . . .	54	55	61	Do.	
8	. . . . .	53	55	62	Do.	
9	. . . . .	53	55	62	Do.	
10	. . . . .	54	55		Do.	

END OF VOL. I.

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